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CASTLEREAGH



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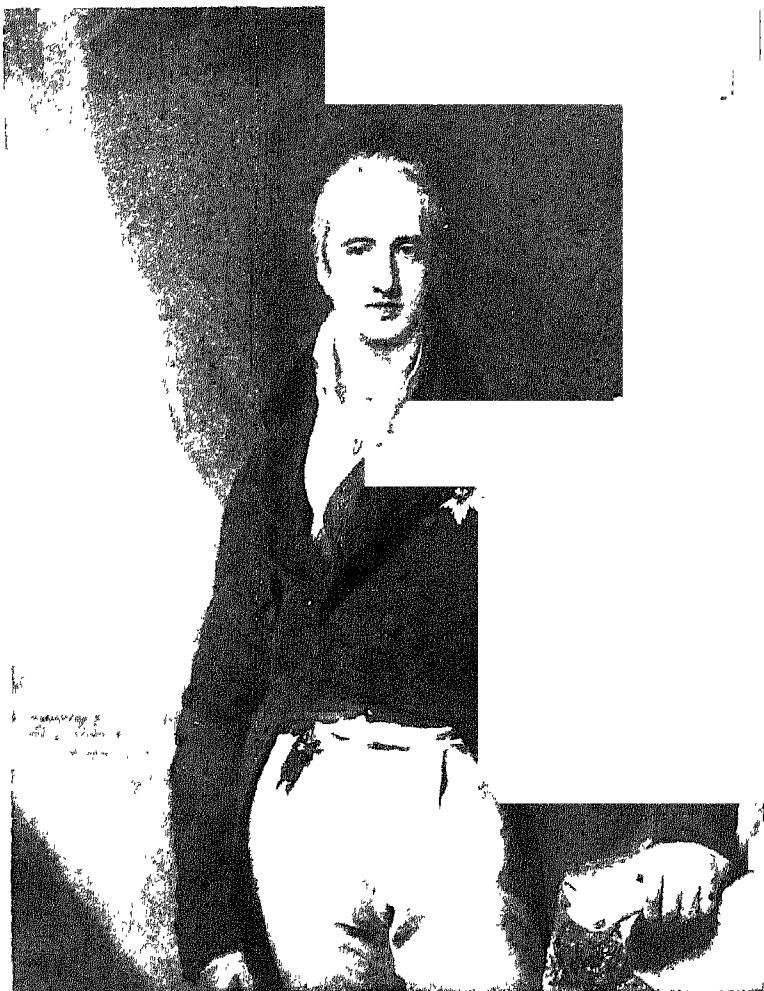
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ROBERT STEWART VISCOUNT CASTLEREAGH  
2ND MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY K.G.

*From the portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence in the collection of the Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.*

# CASTLEREAGH

*The Political Life of  
Robert, Second Marquess of Londonderry*

*by*

SIR J. A. R. MARRIOTT

HONORARY FELLOW, FORMERLY FELLOW, LECTURER AND TUTOR  
IN MODERN HISTORY, OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD;  
LATE M.P. FOR THE CITY OF YORK

*with seven illustrations*



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## PREFACE

THIS book represents, on the one hand, the fulfilment of a long-cherished hope; on the other, an act of tardy expiation. The crime for which expiation is offered is partly personal, partly collective. The reproach which lies on historians at large is considered in the Prologue. The personal crime can be confessed only through the more intimate medium of a Preface.

More than thirty years ago I published a little book on *George Canning* (John Murray, 1903) in which I did less than justice to Castlereagh. The error was not peculiar to me, and might perhaps be regarded as venial in a budding politician and inexperienced historian, who had spent some of the happiest evenings of his Oxford life in the famous club dedicated to Mr. Canning's memory. Yet all these years it has lain heavy on a conscience too tender perhaps for an active participant in politics. That participation combined with other circumstances to delay the expiation even now inadequately made. But, however inadequate, it cannot safely be deferred much longer.

I began collecting materials for this book, slight as it is, soon after the commission of the crime now confessed. But the execution of my design would have been much more imperfect than it is but for the intervening publications of the three historians to whose work I refer in Chapter I. My debt to them is literally

incalculable. Professor Alison Phillips, an old friend and colleague, was the first modern critic, as far as I know, to vindicate Castlereagh's claim to greatness as a diplomatist. Professor Webster's industry has supplied the detailed evidence in support of Professor Phillips' contention. To Dr. Montgomery Hyde I owe a particularly heavy debt, not only for enabling me by his published work on *The Rise of Castlereagh* to confine my own narrative almost entirely to Castlereagh's public career, but for very kindly reading almost the whole of this book in proof, for several valuable suggestions, and for permitting me to draw upon his unique knowledge of the *Londonderry Papers*.

To the present Marquess of Londonderry I am grateful for the encouragement he gave me to embark on this biography of his illustrious predecessor, and for permission to reproduce the portrait of the 2nd Marquess by Sir Thomas Lawrence.

I owe dutiful acknowledgments to His Majesty King Edward VIII for gracious permission to reproduce Lawrence's portrait of the 1st Marquess Wellesley, in the Royal Collection at Windsor. The few portraits are of the men most closely associated with Castlereagh's career, and in selecting them I tried to avoid those which have been frequently reproduced. The face of the victor of Waterloo is, perhaps, more familiar than that of any other Englishman. Fewer people are familiar with the Goya portrait here reproduced. It represents the Sir Arthur Wellesley selected by Castlereagh for the command in the Peninsula, not the Iron Duke familiarized by innumerable reproductions.

The two pages of the original instructions drafted

## PREFACE

by Castlereagh for his own guidance at the Allied Conferences, and approved by the Cabinets of December 1813, will I hope be deemed interesting. The document is at the Record Office, and for help in regard to that and to other illustrations I am indebted to Mr. Peter Wait of Messrs. Methuen & Co.

I have kept the references down to a minimum. For Chapters II-VI students will refer to Dr. Hyde's book, for Chapters XII-XVI and XVIII-XIX to the works of Dr. Webster. The most serious gap left by my predecessors is Castlereagh's tenure of the India Office. Consequently, I have paid special attention to it, and have given detailed references to the documents which I consulted at that office. For kind assistance in a laborious task I am indebted to Mr. W. T. Ottewill, M.B.E., the courteous Librarian and Keeper of the Records of the India Office, where are now preserved in addition to its own records those of John Company.

For the rest I have relied mainly on materials which, though 'original', have been already printed in the *Castlereagh Correspondence* (12 vols.) in the *Cornwallis*, *Wellesley*, and *Wellington Dispatches*, and similar collections. A vast amount of contemporary material is also to be found in the Memoirs, Correspondence, Autobiographies, and Biographies of Castlereagh's contemporaries. Of these I have made full use, and have also read a great part of the fifty volumes of the Parliamentary Debates, covering Castlereagh's career in the House of Commons—an arid, dull and profitless occupation, as some may think. Not so to one who spent some of the happiest years of his life in Parliament, and who found it remarkably little changed from the Parlia-



## CASTLEREAGH

ment of Castlereagh's day! But arid or not, the task cannot be evaded by anyone who would recapture and reproduce the atmosphere breathed by Castlereagh throughout his adult life.

One intimate word in conclusion. It were a matter for regret if the present work, intended as it is to atone for an omission in my youth, should prove an offence in my age. George Grote advised John Stuart Mill, if he would ward off senility, to have always on the stocks some work for the public. If that advice be a subornation to crime, it is, indeed, a crime to which I must plead guilty. But there are, I hope, extenuating circumstances. Although I have been for half a century accumulating materials, it is only in recent years that I have had the leisure—and now only relative—to prepare them for publication. If, then, my pen has to some seemed to be 'prolific', I can at least plead that it was not precociously employed, and I hope that it will be serviceable to the end.

J. A. R. MARRIOTT

LONDON

*May 1936*

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## CHAPTER I

### PROLOGUE: THE MAN AND THE STATESMAN

THE Fates, proverbially capricious in their treatment of mortals, are never more prone to exhibit caprice than in the case of those unwary individuals who mingle in great affairs, who meddle with the mysteries of government. Among the victims of their waywardness not the least conspicuous is Lord Castlereagh.

No modern critic would question Lord Castlereagh's right to a place in the first class of British Parliamentary statesmen. The class is small and select: Sir Robert Walpole, Chatham and Pitt, Peel, Gladstone and Disraeli—about these there can be no dispute. Most people would include Palmerston, some would add Salisbury—and Canning? Even to hint at a doubt whether Canning should have a place alongside, if not above, Castlereagh would have seemed to their contemporaries simply grotesque. Still more grotesque would it have seemed to the Whig historians of the mid-Victorian era. By many of his contemporaries Canning was, indeed, regarded with profound mistrust: but no one despised him, and few detested him. Castlereagh not only evoked the contempt of contemporaries, but was attacked with a concentrated malignity which has no parallel in English political history.

But there has been at work the old common arbitrator, 'Time'. The 'whirligig of time' has brought its revenges. Yet it was not until the post-War years reproduced the situation of a century ago that the resuscitation of Castlereagh's reputation was seriously undertaken by

historical critics. Even now, among English statesmen of the front rank, Castlereagh alone has yet to find a biographer.

Until 1925 the English Foreign Office possessed no portrait of one of the greatest of English Foreign Secretaries. In November of that year a portrait of Lord Castlereagh was hurriedly borrowed in order that the European diplomatists assembled in London for the formal signature of the Locarno Pact might be inspired by the pictorial presence of one of the most distinguished of their craft. Thus Castlereagh, in effigy, presided over that historic assembly; and thanks to the generosity of the present Marquess of Londonderry, the lacuna in the Foreign Office gallery is at last filled up. Of these curious facts it is hard to say which is the more significant: the neglect with which Castlereagh was treated for a full century after his death; the tardy recognition, deferred until our own day, of the great part which he had played in the affairs of the United Kingdom and of Europe; or the unique, though dilatory, homage paid to his memory by the signatories of the Locarno Pact.

Hardly less curious is the fact that during the forty years after Lord Castlereagh's death only one article devoted to his life and work appeared in *The Quarterly Review*. It was written by John Wilson Croker as a review of the Castlereagh Correspondence (Dec. 1848). Fourteen years afterwards Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards third Marquess of Salisbury, contributed to the same *Review* an article on Lord Castlereagh which was devoted almost exclusively to his Foreign Policy. 'Prudent panegyrists', wrote Lord Robert Cecil, 'will confine their attention to his career as Foreign Secretary during the two closing years of his life. It is upon them that his title to fame must exclusively rest. The other transactions in which he was mixed up hardly

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reflect much light upon his name. . . . A certain admiration is due to skill in whatever occupation it is displayed and, therefore, we cannot refuse to admire the skill with which he effected the Irish Union. But still we should prefer to dwell on any other display of administrative 'ability' than that which consists of bribing knaves into honesty and fools into Common Sense.'

Such language is more characteristic of the 'great master of gibes and flouts and jeers' than of the statesman destined to provide the Legislative Union with its most conclusive justification. It is only fair, however, to remember that at the time when Lord Salisbury wrote (1862) research had not availed to put the transactions of 1799-1800 into true historical perspective. Castlereagh's half-brother, the 3rd Marquess of Londonderry, endeavoured in 1848 to 'rescue the name of Castlereagh from the calumnies and abuse which had been so long and so industriously cast upon it by political adversaries and pardoned rebels.' To this end he collected from various colleagues and contemporaries of his brother a number of 'appreciations' which do hardly less credit to the insight and foresight of the writers than to the much maligned object of their panegyrics. But the slight memoir prefixed to twelve volumes of *Correspondence* did little to counteract, in the heyday of Liberalism, the popular prejudice against the colleague of Lord Eldon and the obsequious accomplice (for so was Castlereagh misrepresented) of Prince Metternich and the autocrats of the Holy Alliance.

It is interesting to speculate what the result might have been had Sir Walter Scott acceded to Lord Londonderry's request that he would write his brother's Biography. Scott would surely have been much better employed than in writing the *Life of Napoleon*; but he declined the task. Not that he disdained the sug-

gestion. On the contrary, he would have been delighted 'to contribute to place that most upright and excellent statesman's memory in the rank which it ought to hold with his countrymen.' He realized that public opinion had been grossly misled, and that 'the truth of history has in no case been so much encroached upon to serve the purposes of party.' But he pleaded that he knew little of the House of Commons and less of Ireland: and besides, he was the friend of Canning. So the task fell to Sir Archibald Alison whose accomplishment evoked somewhat tepid commendation from Lord Salisbury. 'His labours', wrote the latter, 'have all the heartiness of a labour of love, and their partiality is not perhaps out of place as a counterpoise to the efforts of those whose judgments have been warped by a bias more marked and less commendable.' A counterpoise it was not. But Alison's vindication deserved a better fate than it met. Sir Archibald Alison had, however, the misfortune to write at a time when the Whigs had almost exclusive possession of the field of historical criticism. Alison was an unblushing and unrepentant Tory, and in those days to be a Tory was to avow intellectual inferiority. Moreover, *The Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart* has palpable blemishes. The style is not, indeed, lacking in dignity and perspicuity, but the composition and arrangement are so confused as to deter any reader who is not bent on extracting the information that its pages afford. Yet, though the references need to be checked, the work is based on laborious research upon original (though not unprinted) material: and Alison has placed all subsequent workers in the same field under an obligation that it were ungracious not to acknowledge.

In spite, however, of his spirited vindication, the popular prejudice against Castlereagh persisted. 'Ire-

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land will never forget the statesman of the legislative union.' So runs the inscription on Castlereagh's tomb in the Abbey. Entirely accurate as a statement of fact, as a eulogy it is ambiguous. Few statesmen were, indeed, more cruelly misjudged by contemporaries. 'The villain who has left a memory that smells of hot blood', is among the most quotable of hostile judgments; but to speak of him as 'the Robespierre of Ireland' touches, perhaps, the nadir of inept analogy. Lord Cornwallis, his partner in the work of Union, found him 'so cold that nothing can warm him', and Lord Salisbury inferentially admitted the impeachment when he wrote, 'He had not the talents which captivate the imagination or the warmth of sympathy that kindles love.' Yet if Castlereagh could not kindle love he could evoke passionate hatred.

I met Murder on the way,—  
He had a mask like Castlereagh,—  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim,  
Seven bloodhounds followed him!

All were fat and well they might  
Be in admirable plight  
For one by one and two by two,  
He tossed them human hearts to chew  
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

So Shelley wrote in the *Masque of Anarchy* (1817), in verses less polished than his wont, but moved to bitter denunciation of the man whom he held responsible for the 'massacre' at Peterloo. But of all his calumniators the most savage and persistent was Lord Byron. Byron, largely inspired no doubt by Thomas Moore, could never forgive the chief agent of a brutal Government in the enslavement of Ireland, the statesman who contributed so largely to the overthrow of Napoleon—

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an overthrow which Byron, inspired presumably by hatred of 'Legitimacy', always affected to deplore. The extinction of the independence of the Genoese Republic; the whip with the six thongs wherewith to scourge freedom-loving Britons; and the persecution of Queen Caroline—for all these crimes Byron attributed the main responsibility to the detested Castlereagh, and to the day of his death, and after it, pursued him, in canto after canto of *Don Juan* with a venomous hatred varied only by the bitterest scorn. Thus in the Dedication to *Don Juan* he wrote:

Cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant  
 Dabbling its sleek young hands in Erin's gore,  
 And thus for wider carnage taught to pant,  
 Transferred to gorge upon a sister-shore  
 The vilest tool that Tyranny could want,  
 With just enough of talent, and no more,  
 To lengthen fetters by another fixed,  
 And offer poison long already mixed.

An orator of such set trash of phrase  
 Ineffably, legitimately, vile,  
 That even its grossest flatterers dare not praise,  
 Nor foes—all nations—condescend to smile,  
 Nor even a sprightly blunder's spark can blaze  
 From that Ixion's grindstone's ceaseless toil,  
 That turns and turns to give the world a notion  
 Of endless torments and perpetual motion.

If we may judge of matter by the mind,  
 Emasculated to the marrow *It*  
 Hath but two objects, how to serve, and bind,  
 Deeming the chain it wears even men may fit,  
 Eutropius of its many masters—blind  
 To worth as freedom, wisdom as to wit,  
 Fearless because *no* free feeling dwells in ice,  
 Its very courage stagnates to a vice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dedication to Don Juan*, xii, xiii, xv.

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Byron does, indeed, explain in his Preface to Cantos vi, vii, viii, that the stanzas on Castlereagh were written some time before his death, and he adds: 'Had that person's oligarchy died with him, they would have been suppressed; as it is, I am aware of nothing in the manner of his death or of his life to prevent the free expression of the opinions of all whom his whole existence was consumed in endeavouring to enslave. That he was an amiable man in *private* life may or may not be true: but with this the public have nothing to do; and as to lamenting his death, it will be time enough when Ireland has ceased to mourn for his birth. As a minister, I, for one of millions, looked upon him as the most despotic in intention and the weakest in intellect, that ever tyrannized over a country. It is the first time, indeed, since the Normans, that England has been insulted by a *minister* (at least) who could not speak English, and that Parliament permitted itself to be dictated to in the language of Mrs. Malaprop. . . . In his life he was—what all the world knows and half of it will feel for years to come, unless his death prove a "moral lesson" to the surviving Sejani of Europe. It may at least serve as some consolation to the nations that their oppressors are not happy, and in some instances judge so justly of their actions as to anticipate the sentence of mankind. Let us hear no more of this man; and let Ireland remove the ashes of her Grattan from the sanctuary of Westminster. Shall the patriot of humanity repose by the Werther of politics!!'

Nor were the Political Diarists much behind the Poets of the Romantic School in detestation and denunciation of Castlereagh, living or dead. Creevey's judgement may be discounted, for, though he was not lacking in shrewdness or humour, his temper was malignant, and his pen was ever dipped in gall. Even so it is



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difficult to imagine how any man with one drop of the milk of human kindness in him could within two days of his victim's death have written the words that follow:—

'Death settles a fellow's reputation in no time, and now that Castlereagh is dead, I defy any human being to discover a single feature of his character that can stand a moment's criticism. By experience, good manners and great courage, he managed a corrupt House of Commons pretty well, with some address. This is the whole of his intellectual merit. He had a limited understanding and no knowledge, and his whole life was spent in an avowed, cold blooded contempt of every honest public principle. A worse, or if he had had talent and ambition for it, a more dangerous public man never existed.'<sup>1</sup>

At long last, however, Castlereagh is coming into his own. After the bitter jibes and savage cruelty of contemporaries, after some years of almost complete neglect, and more still of quite inadequate and uncritical appreciation, we are now enabled to see the man in his true character, the statesman in his full stature.

This critical appreciation we owe mainly to three writers: to Dr. H. Montgomery Hyde who in *The Rise of Castlereagh*<sup>2</sup> has explored with great diligence all that can throw light on Castlereagh's career in the Irish Parliament; to Professor Alison Phillips who was the first to put Castlereagh's achievements as Foreign Minister in true perspective;<sup>3</sup> and to Dr. Webster, who by patient and minute research has revealed the whole

<sup>1</sup> Creevey to Miss Ord, 14 August 1922 (Creevey Papers, II, 42-3).

<sup>2</sup> (London, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> *The Confederation of Europe* (London, 1914) and *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. X, c. i (Cambridge, 1907).

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course of the brilliant diplomacy which, sustained by the efforts of the Iron Duke in the field, served to put Great Britain in that position of pre-eminence among the powers of Europe, which she unquestionably enjoyed during Castlereagh's tenure of the Foreign Office (1812-22).<sup>1</sup>

In the fields reaped so closely by these scholars there is little left for others to glean. But these fields do not constitute the whole property. They cover only the two areas lying between 1769 and 1802, and between 1812 and 1822. There is an important area only partially explored. From 1802 to 1806 Castlereagh served as President of the Board of Control, first under Addington and later under Pitt. His tenure of that important office coincided with some of the momentous years during which Lord Wellesley as Governor-General of India (1798-1805) was holding the territories of the East India Company against the intrigues of the French and the assaults of the Marathas.

Before Castlereagh left the India Office he had become (1805) Secretary of State for War and the Colonies in Pitt's last Ministry, and, though he resigned on the death of Pitt (January 1806) he resumed that office under the Duke of Portland (1807) and held it until the duel with Canning (1809) interrupted, for a time, his official career. He was thus at the War Office during the Trafalgar campaign, and again in the momentous years which saw the opening stages of the Peninsular War.

Apart from the serious hiatus in Castlereagh's official life that still remains to be filled up, the time would seem to have come to survey his career as a whole, and to estimate his place in the history of British statesmanship.

<sup>1</sup> *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, I (1812-1815) (London, 1931); II (1815-1822) (London, 1925).

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It is indeed remarkable that the performance of this task should have been delayed longer in the case of Castlereagh than in that of any British statesman of equal eminence. In the course of a public career extending over more than a quarter of a century Lord Castlereagh was responsible for the suppression, with a minimum of bloodshed and a maximum of forbearance, of a rebellion which, if successful, would have made Ireland a Dependency of Napoleonic France; for the Act by which Ireland was incorporated with Great Britain in the Legislative Union; for sustaining (if not uncritically) Lord Wellesley's policy in India; for the control of the War Office during some of the most critical years of the Napoleonic War; for holding together, with infinite tact and firmness the European alliance by which Napoleon was finally overthrown; for representing his country at the Congress of Vienna; for the conclusion of the Treaty of Vienna; for the conduct of Foreign Affairs during the difficult years that followed the conclusion of peace; and finally for firm adherence to a line of policy which gave his country a deserved reputation for maintaining European peace without any sacrifice of those principles of political liberty which, among the Great Powers, Great Britain alone successfully championed. Such was Castlereagh's achievement in external affairs.

Castlereagh must, of course, bear his share of responsibility for the domestic policy pursued by the Liverpool Government in regard to social order, and public finance, during the years immediately following on Waterloo. But popular opinion fastened upon him a measure of odium far in excess of his reasonable share. His and Lord Sidmouth's were the two heads that Thistlewood hoped to carry on pikes through the streets of London. But Castlereagh, though the most eminent member of an exceptionally distinguished

Ministry, and Leader of the House of Commons, was not Home Secretary nor a Law officer. On the contrary, he was immersed in the work of the Foreign Office in difficult days. Most days are, indeed, difficult for a Foreign Minister, and in particular the days that follow a prolonged war.

The policy of the Government at home as well as abroad will, however, demand detailed attention in due course. In the meantime Castlereagh must be allowed to share the odium or credit that may attach to the one or the other. He would have been the last to shirk responsibility or to court popularity. It may be that even in days when Parliament was directly responsible only to a very limited electorate he was too careless of public opinion, and took too little pains even to conciliate the House of Commons. He had high ideals, he held fast to principles, and was wholly courageous in defence of them. But he appeared to have no spark of enthusiasm in his own composition and certainly failed to evoke it in others. He had none of the histrionic ability essential to great oratory, and was thus at an obvious disadvantage as compared with his great rival, George Canning. But Canning, with all his gifts, inspired less confidence among contemporaries than Castlereagh, and (save in his last years) carried less weight in the inner Councils of his Party. For the brilliant rhetoric which captivates great popular audiences there is, indeed, no place in council, and less than is commonly supposed in an English Parliament. Educated Englishmen instinctively mistrust histrionics almost as much in public as in private intercourse. Nor is there a more fatal obstacle to a successful ministerial career than a reputation for exceptional intellectual brilliancy. In a free-lance, sparkling wit is not merely tolerated but demanded. It is the Marshalls and Snelgroves that inspire confidence as occupants of the

Treasury Bench. Of recent leaders of the House of Commons Mr. W. H. Smith was probably the most successful. His success was the reward of superb common sense, of perfect integrity and transparent honesty, combined with a business ability as remarkable as it was unobtrusive. Among the contemporaries of Castlereagh and Canning, Addington was a man of similar type. And the 'Doctor' was the butt of Canning precisely as 'Old Morality' was the butt of Lord Randolph Churchill. But the Marshalls and the Snelgroves have their revenge. Spencer Perceval attained to the first place in the Party twenty years before Canning. Lord Liverpool excluded him from it for fifteen.

Castlereagh was no Liverpool; still less was he a Canning. To Lord Byron he was, as already indicated, anathema, and alike in verse and prose Byron pursued him with persistent hostility. For all that was amiss in Europe Castlereagh must be blamed. If the weather was foul at Geneva his was the fault! 'Really we had lately such stupid mists, fogs, and perpetual density that one would think Castlereagh had the foreign affairs of Heaven also on his hands.'<sup>1</sup> But it is perhaps hardly less to his credit to have inspired the malignity of Byron than to have evoked the wholehearted admiration of statesmen of the type of Thiers. Writing of his influence in the Councils of Europe the latter says, 'In mind honest and penetrating, in character prudent and firm, having in his manner the proud simplicity of the English he was called to exercise and did exercise the greatest influence.' Of the impression he made upon those with whom he was brought into the closest official relations much must be said in the course of this narrative. Enough has, perhaps, been already said, or hinted, to justify the attempt to put into true per-

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Journals*, iii. 342 (July 29 1816).

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spective his public career as a whole. It is the appropriate function of a Prelude to introduce the *leit-motives*. Succeeding numbers must develop these fugitive themes.

## CHAPTER II

### BIRTH, PARENTAGE AND EDUCATION

ROBERT STEWART, 2nd Marquess of Londonderry, known to history as Viscount Castlereagh, was born in Dublin on June 18 in the year 1769. On that same day was born another great Irishman, Castlereagh's life-long friend, Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington; and on their forty-seventh birthday the Duke won his crowning victory at Waterloo.<sup>1</sup> Though by birth and immediate descent an Irishman and attached to Ireland by ties of property, Castlereagh had in him more of the Scot than the Irishman. In some of the gifts with which Irishmen are commonly endowed Castlereagh was indeed conspicuously lacking; from most of their failings he was fortunately free. By remoter descent he was in fact a Scotsman; by breeding he was something more than a Scot—an Ulsterman.

The branch of the Stewarts to which Castlereagh belonged hailed originally from Wigtonshire, but his family was among those who in 1607 were 'planted' by James I in Ulster, on the confiscated lands of the northern chieftains, the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell.

The Plantation of Ulster formed one of the many turning-points in Anglo-Irish history. The idea of colonization was just beginning to take hold of the popular imagination in England. Hawkins, Frobisher and Drake had taught Englishmen how to fight at sea;

<sup>1</sup> The date of Waterloo certainly coincides with that of Castlereagh's birth. But, though the date of Wellington's birth has been disputed, I fear the double coincidence must be abandoned.

## THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER

Raleigh and Gilbert had made valiant though vain attempts to plant Englishmen on the soil of North America. The enterprise of the Elizabethan sea-dogs was far from fruitless. They pointed the way. The Chartered Companies succeeded in 1607 where a few years earlier Raleigh and Gilbert had failed.

The year that witnessed the Plantation of Virginia witnessed also the Plantation of Ulster.

The flight of the Earls in 1607 afforded the opportunity. The Lord Deputy of the day, Sir Arthur Chichester, was one of the most sagacious statesmen ever sent from England to govern Ireland. The greater part of Ulster having been declared confiscate to the Crown, Chichester's plan was to treat the Irish peasants as the actual possessors of the tribal lands, and having satisfied their claims on a generous scale, offer the residue to English and Scottish settlers. The Commissioners appointed by the Crown reversed the order of procedure. They refused to recognize the claims of the tribesmen, assigned to alien settlers all the best land in Ulster, and left the inferior remnant to the natives. The reversal of his plan wellnigh broke Chichester's heart, but he had to superintend the distasteful work. In the final result the tribesmen were not entirely displaced. The settlers could not dispense with their labour. Their tribal status survived not as a legal right but as an Ulster 'Custom', though the ownership of the land passed for the most part to 'landlords' alien from the tribesmen in blood, tradition and creed.

Among the new grantees were the Stewarts. In the course of generations they prospered greatly, as Scotsmen will, all the world over; they made good marriages, and for some generations were established at Ballylawn, Co. Donegal.

Alexander Stewart (1700-81), Castlereagh's grandfather, was born at Ballylawn in 1700. He went into



business at Belfast and married his cousin, Mary Cowan, the daughter of an alderman of the historic city of Derry. Miss Cowan brought Alexander Stewart a large fortune with part of which he bought an estate at Newtownards in Co. Down. On the Newtownards estate was a manor house and demesne known as Mount Pleasant. Alexander Stewart renamed it Mount Stewart; it became his home and remains the home of his descendants. Alexander Stewart died in 1781 at the age of 82 and bequeathed to his eldest son Robert a fine inheritance, including the Mount Stewart estate.

Robert Stewart, Castlereagh's father, was born a Commoner in 1739; he died Marquess of Londonderry in 1821. In 1766 he married Lady Sarah Frances Seymour-Conway, daughter of the 1st Earl (afterwards Marquess) of Hertford. The bride's father had a good property near Lisburn, and was, moreover, the owner of parliamentary boroughs—more valuable than land—in the north of Ireland. At the time of Robert Stewart's marriage his father-in-law was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and the wedding took place with great *éclat* in the Chapel Royal of the Castle. The bride's mother was a sister of the 3rd Duke of Grafton who was Secretary of State in the first Rockingham Ministry of 1766, and, on the fall of Rockingham, himself became First Lord of the Treasury and the nominal head of the Ministry—more commonly known as Chatham's Ministry.<sup>1</sup> Lord Hertford was also connected with the ducal family of Somerset. Consequently, Robert Stewart's marriage brought him powerful English connections. He himself entered the Irish Parliament as member for Co. Down in 1769, and continued to hold the seat until 1783. Six years later he was created Baron London-

<sup>1</sup> Whether Lord Chatham or the Duke was actually 'Prime Minister' is a disputed point, now generally decided in favour of Chatham. See Marriott: *Mechanism of the Modern State*, II, 74.

derry in the Peerage of Ireland. Thereafter his promotion was, thanks to his powerful English connections, extraordinarily rapid. He became Viscount Castlereagh in 1795, Earl of Londonderry in 1796, and in 1816 was elevated to the Marquisate. In 1800 he had been elected a Representative Peer of Ireland and in that capacity took his seat, directly the Union was consummated, in the Upper House of the Imperial Parliament. His son and successor in the Marquisate remained until his death in the House of Commons. Lord Londonderry's first wife bore him two sons: the elder, Alexander, died in childhood (1769); the second, Robert, the subject of this biography, was born in the same year. The child was barely twelve months old when he lost his mother, and in 1775 his father married again. His second marriage was politically even more advantageous than the first. The lady was the Honourable Frances Pratt, the eldest daughter of Charles Pratt, 1st Baron (and 1st Earl) Camden. Chief Justice Pratt, as he then was, won fame and popularity by his judgement in the case of John Wilkes (1763) when he ruled that general warrants were illegal. He received a peerage in 1765 and in the House of Lords opposed the taxation of the American Colonies. In particular he declared the Stamp Act to be unconstitutional. He became Lord Chancellor in the Grafton (or Chatham) Ministry of 1766, and, despite his advocacy of the American cause, retained the Great Seal until 1770, when he was dismissed by the King. Twelve years later, on the fall of Lord North, he became Lord President of the Council under Rockingham (1782) but would have nothing to do with the Fox-North Coalition. Under the younger Pitt, however, he resumed his office (1784) and held it until his death in 1794.

Himself a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, he took a great interest in the education not only of his own grandchildren, but in that of his daughter's stepson,

Robert. Though the lady had eleven children of her own, she was an excellent stepmother to Robert who warmly reciprocated her affection.

Robert was denied the advantage, enjoyed by his younger brother Charles<sup>1</sup> and by his rival George Canning, of a sojourn at Eton, but he was well educated. He was sent first, under the care of a tutor, as a boarder to the Royal School of Armagh and afterwards to a small private school at Portaferry, a village adjacent to his home at Newtownards. From there he was sent, on Lord Camden's advice, to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he distinguished himself in classics. At some time after leaving Cambridge (1789) he made, after the fashion of the day, the 'grand tour'. Whether the tour took place in 1789, as Sir Archibald Alison stated, or two years later would be a matter of no importance but for the stirring events which were then taking place in France. Dr. Hyde has proved conclusively that young Robert Stewart was in Paris in 1791, closely observing the political and financial situation and listening with rapt attention to the brilliant rhetoricians in the Constituent Assembly.<sup>2</sup>

His interest in those debates was doubtless quickened by the fact that by this time he had himself become a member of a Legislature, hardly less distinguished for debating capacity than the National Assembly of France. Robert Stewart took his seat in 1790 in the Irish Parliament in College Green.

<sup>1</sup> Third Marquess of Londonderry and great-grandfather of the present Marquess.

<sup>2</sup> Hyde: *Rise of Castlereagh*, pp. 3 f.

## · CHAPTER III

### CASTLEREAGH IN THE IRISH PARLIAMENT

ULSTER has always been distinguished by the intensity of its political passions. But taking its politics seriously it has always exhibited greater devotion to principles than to parties or even to persons. If Parties or Party leaders desert their principles, Ulster will the more obstinately adhere to them. A rugged independence is in the blood; attempted dictation from whatever quarter is certain to evoke determined opposition.

The Hill family, with the Marquis of Downshire <sup>1</sup> at their head, was, in the eighteenth century, threatening to establish a permanent ascendancy in Co. Down. In the election of 1784 Lord Hillsborough, the heir-apparent to the Downshire estates, had defeated Robert Stewart, the elder, and was again to be a candidate at the election of 1790. An 'Independent' party, supported by the Whigs, the Presbyterians, and the linen manufacturers, determined to challenge the Downshire interest and capture, if possible, both seats. Robert Stewart's acceptance of a peerage left them, however, with only one candidate, the Hon. Edward Ward, the second son of Viscount Bangor of Castle Ward. His son, Robert, was accordingly invited to take his father's place, and though not yet of age, to fight the seat. Young as he was, he proved an admirable choice and fought to a finish a tremendous battle.

<sup>1</sup> The Earl of Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies under Lord North (1770), became 1st Marquis of Downshire in 1789.

The incidents of such battles are vividly described in Charles Lever's *Charles O'Malley*, where fiction, for once, falls short of the facts. The contest of 1790 in Co. Down was historic, and History, not for the first time nor the last, was stranger, to modern ears, than Fiction. Both sides resorted to every imaginable device to secure victory. Of the 'forty-shilling freeholders' with whom the decision rested, there can have been few who were not bought, first by one side, then by the other, several times over. In his letter of thanks to the 'Independent Electors of the County of Down' the youthful member referred with satisfaction to the 'testimony of affection, zeal and attachment' which he had received from 'the noble, the virtuous and the independent' during the course of his arduous contest. Many such there may have been, but the stark realities of the situation were accurately described in the remarkable pamphlet published by 'A Northern Whig' in September 1791. Wolfe Tone, its author, advocated the extension of the franchise to 'such Catholics only as have a freehold of ten pounds by the year, and on the other hand [he would] strike off . . . the wretched tribe of forty-shilling freeholders whom we see driven to their octennial market by their landlords, as much their property as the sheep or the bullocks which they brand with their names'.<sup>1</sup>

The prolongation of the contest meant a golden harvest for the freeholders. The poll was kept open for 69 days and the contest cost the Stewarts £60,000.<sup>2</sup> To pay his son's expenses Lord Londonderry sold pictures, books and other valuables as well as a portion

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Lecky, VI. 465.

<sup>2</sup> This was the figure given by Charles Stewart and commonly accepted, but see Hyde (*op. cit.* note to p. 67) who quotes documentary evidence to show that it was £6069 2s. 7d. The smaller sum would hardly be described as 'immense', nor would it account for 'impoverishment'.

### ‘GRATTAN’S PARLIAMENT’

of his Dublin property. The rebuilding of Mount Stewart had to be suspended and the new Peer was permanently impoverished. As it was, his son only won the second seat. His opponent, Lord Hillsborough, headed the poll with 3,534 votes; Robert Stewart was second with 3,114; his colleague, Edward Ward, received 2,958 votes but in order to make sure of Stewart’s return chivalrously withdrew some days before the close of the poll.

When Robert Stewart took his seat in the Parliament in College Green, Ireland was midway in a political experiment which possesses more than an antiquarian interest.

The position of ‘Grattan’s Parliament’, as it is popularly called, was defined by Statutes passed in the English and Irish Parliaments; but the significance of those statutes, of their repeal, and of the subsequent history of the Irish Parliament, can be apprehended only by a brief retrospect.

Parliamentary institutions in Ireland were coeval in antiquity with those of England. Edward I may be regarded as the real founder of both. But the Irish Parliament was, until the reign of Henry VIII, representative only of the ‘Pale’—or Anglo-Irish settlers. For the exclusion of the native Irish Sir John Davies, who was Speaker of the Irish House of Commons in 1613, assigns two reasons. One was that as the ‘mere Irish’ lived for the most part outside the limits of the shires they could not vote for knights, and that there were no cities or boroughs in Irish Ireland from which burgesses could be sent to Parliament. The other, and probably more convincing, reason was that ‘the State did not hold the Irish fit to be trusted with the counsel of the realm’.

In 1541, however, Henry VIII decided to assume the title of ‘King of Ireland’ instead of that of ‘Lord of

Ireland' borne since the twelfth century by his predecessors. To this change he thought it wise to secure the assent of the Irish chieftains and accordingly certain Irish chieftains were summoned to attend the Parliament of 1541. Whether chieftains, as such, attended subsequent Parliaments is uncertain. Those of them who accepted Peerages were, of course, summoned to the Irish House of Lords. To the twelve shires created (according to tradition) by King John nineteen were added (mostly by Queen Elizabeth) under the Tudors, though only twenty-seven were represented in 'Perrot's Parliament' of 1585. Four cities and thirty-two boroughs were also represented in that Parliament.

James I was anxious that all the inhabitants of Ireland should be treated equally as his subjects, and consequently that the 'native' Irish, no less than the Anglo-Irish settlers, should be represented in Parliament. Lest, however, the Irish should overpower the English interest he created a number of new boroughs, many of them mere hamlets, in his lately planted Province of Ulster. No fewer than 232 members were accordingly summoned to his first Parliament (1613), and 226 attended. Thus, as Sir John Davies in his address to the Lord Deputy complacently observed, for the first time 'the English of birth and the English of blood, the new British colony and the old Irish natives, were all met together to make laws for the common good of themselves and of their posterities'.

The creation of new Peers subsequently increased the size of the House of the Lords, though the number of Lords Spiritual had been diminished by the suppression of the Religious Houses. The House of Commons came ultimately to consist of 300 members: 64 knights, two for each of the thirty-two shires, 234 for one hundred and seventeen cities and boroughs, and two for Dublin University.

Such was the composition of the House of Commons of which Robert Stewart found himself in 1790 a member.

Until 1782-3, however, the powers of the Irish Parliament had been severely restricted.

They were first restricted by the Statute of Drogheda—an Act of the Irish Parliament, more commonly known as 'Poynings' Law', from the name of the Deputy under whom it was passed. Poynings' Law (10 Henry VII, c. 4) virtually put the legislative power of the Irish Parliament under the control of the English Privy Council. No Bill could be passed in Ireland until it had received the assent under the Great Seal of England of the King in Council. Thereafter it could be accepted or rejected by the Irish Parliament, but could not be amended.

Apart from the claim to control the legislation of the Irish Parliament through the King in Council, England further claimed the right to bind Ireland by legislation passed at Westminster. The jurisdiction of the British Parliament was, indeed, disputed, and in order to clinch the matter a Declaratory Act, known as the *Act of 6 George I*, was passed in 1719. This Act declared that the British Parliament 'had hath and of right ought to have full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland'. The Act further declared that the English House of Lords was the ultimate appellate tribunal for Irish suits, and that 'Ireland hath been, is, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto and dependent upon the Imperial Crown of Great Britain as being inseparably united and annexed thereto'.

The claim made by the British Parliament was deeply resented in Ireland, and the dependent position of the Irish Parliament was one of the arguments advanced in favour of a union of the two Parliaments, during the



reign of Queen Anne. For the discontent which reached a climax in Ireland, some ten years before Castlereagh was elected for Co. Down, there were other reasons not less potent. One was the condition of Irish trade and agriculture; another was the degrading position of the Roman Catholics.

During the later years of the seventeenth century Ireland had enjoyed an exceptional measure of prosperity.

'Lands', writes a contemporary witness, 'were everywhere improved, and rents advanced to near double what they had been a few years before. The Kingdom abounded with money; trade flourished, even to the envy of our neighbours; cities, especially Dublin, increased exceedingly; gentlemen's seats were built or building everywhere; and parks, enclosures, and other ornaments were carefully promoted insomuch that many places of the Kingdom equalled the improvements of England. . . . And the King's revenue increased proportionately to the Kingdom's advance in wealth and was every day growing. It amounted to more than three hundred thousand pounds per annum—a sum sufficient to defray all the expenses of the crown, and to return yearly a considerable sum to England to which this nation had formerly been a constant expense.'<sup>1</sup>

Archbishop King was a strong partisan who owed his ecclesiastical preferments to the Protestant interest, but his glowing account of Ireland's prosperity at this period is amply confirmed by other contemporary writers and by modern research.

'Before the days of coal and steam', wrote Froude,<sup>2</sup> 'the unlimited water-power of Ireland gave her natural advantages in the race of manufactures which, if she

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop (of Dublin) King (1650-1729). Quoted by Dunbar Ingram, *Two Chapters of Irish History*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Froude: *English in Ireland*, I. 181.

had received fair play, would have attracted thither thousands of skilled immigrants. . . . This (fair play) was precisely what the reconstituted Government of England refused to allow her. By the parties now and for another century in the ascendant there Ireland was regarded as a colony to be administered not for her own benefit but for the convenience of the mother country.'

British colonial policy was, as Adam Smith himself admits, not more but less selfish and exclusive than that of any other country in the eighteenth century. But it spelt disaster to the British colony in Ireland, and less directly, to the native Irish. Cromwell, a staunch Unionist, had given Ireland commercial equality at the same time as he deprived her of her separate Parliament. At the Restoration the Legislative Union was dissolved; the Irish Parliament was restored; and Ireland, after a brief union with England, was again reduced to the position of a 'Plantation', with its semi-independent Legislature. Though admitted to the benefits of the *Navigation Act* of 1660, Ireland was excluded from that of 1663. Her incipient shipping industry, for the development of which her geographical position and her many harbours gave her obvious advantages, was gradually destroyed. She was further forbidden to export her cattle and agricultural produce to England. That was a measure of protection for English agriculturists which England was, if she willed, entitled to impose. But an Act of 1698 went further. In deference to the jealousy of English manufacturers the Irish woollen trade, successfully revived by Cromwell, was suppressed. Irish manufacturers were forbidden to export their goods not merely to England, but to any other country. This again was only in accord with the fashionable colonial policy of the day, but to Ireland, as somewhat more advanced industrially, it was evidently more hurtful than

to the American Plantations, not least because the law was more easily enforced. Yet even in Ireland restrictive commercial legislation led to the development of an important smuggling trade, and contributed to that contempt for law which is a lesson more quickly inculcated than eradicated.

For the economic deterioration of Ireland in the eighteenth century the British Parliament was primarily responsible. For the shameful treatment of the Roman Catholics responsibility rests with the Irish Parliament.

That Parliament was an exclusively Protestant body and was thus representative, at most, of one-fifth of the people of Ireland. The Treaty of Limerick (1691) by which toleration was promised to the Roman Catholics was never ratified by the Irish Parliament, which, by successive enactments built up the notorious Penal Code.

With the details of that Code the present narrative need not be concerned, since its more obnoxious items were repealed before Castlereagh entered Parliament. It may suffice to quote the judgement passed upon it by one of the most enlightened of Irish Protestants. 'I must do it justice,' said Burke; 'it was a complete system, full of coherence and consistency, well digested and well composed in all its parts. It was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people and the debasement in them of human nature itself as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.'

By successive Acts of the Irish Legislature—notably the Acts of 1774, 1778, 1782 and 1789—most of the social and economic disabilities attaching to Roman Catholics were removed, but not, as the sequel will disclose, the main political disabilities.

## DEMAND FOR REFORM

The reform of the Penal Code, like the relaxation of the commercial restrictions, was largely due to the persistent agitation of the new 'Irish' Party which gradually came to the front in the Protestant Colony in Ireland in the course of the eighteenth century.

Founded by William Molyneux,<sup>1</sup> (1656-98) and Dean Swift the new Party achieved victory under Henry Flood, Henry Grattan and Lord Charlemont. It was the gloomy Dean of St. Patrick's, who, taking skilful, if unscrupulous advantage of the 'farcical panic' about Woods' halfpence first raised the cry of Legislative Independence and Free Trade for Ireland. In the famous *Drapier Letters*<sup>2</sup> he assumed the character of a Dublin tradesman and undertook to demonstrate that any one who accepted the new halfpennies stood to lose nearly elevenpence in a shilling, or (with a parade of precision) that sixty-six of them would be needed to purchase a quart of twopenny ale. The argument was farcical, and the resultant panic groundless; but Swift's object was attained. He had caught the ear of the Irish public, and used his opportunity to agitate for Legislative Independence and Free Trade.

The agitation was, however, transitory and abortive. For thirty years (1725-59) the tranquillity of Ireland was broken only by sporadic outbreaks of a special brand of agrarian outrage known as 'Whiteboyism'. The renewal of constitutional agitation dates from the election of Henry Flood to the Irish House of Commons (1759). It was not, however, until an impulse was received from external events that the agitation in Ireland yielded tangible results.

The revolt of the American Colonies had an immediate repercussion upon Ireland. Between the two

<sup>1</sup> Cf. in particular 'The Case of Ireland being bound by Act of Parliament in England stated' (1698).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. especially Letter IV.

cases there was a striking parallel. Both in Ireland and in North America there were men of British descent who acknowledged unreservedly the authority of the British Crown but repudiated the jurisdiction of the British Parliament. In both cases the real question at issue was less constitutional than commercial: to both England appeared in the guise not of a fond mother but a harsh stepmother—intent only on securing her own material advantage.

But it was not only a matter of parallels and analogies. The revolt of the American Colonies had a still more direct effect upon the Irish situation. As the war against the colonial rebels proceeded, Ireland was of necessity more and more denuded of British troops, and her coasts, owing to the pre-occupation of the British Navy, were left open to the attacks of American privateers. In 1778 the notorious Paul Jones, with a hostile squadron, was hovering around the Irish coast, and in 1779 actually captured a ship of war in Belfast Lough. The Executive was powerless. The Irish Treasury was empty, and though the Government was urged to raise a militia force, it was unable to do so. Yet the need was urgent. 'All through the country', writes Lecky, 'but especially in the maritime towns, there was terror and insecurity, and it became evident that . . . as the Executive could do nothing for the defence of the country, the greatest disasters were to be feared unless the gentry took the matter into their own hands.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1778 they resolved to do so. Associations for self-defence were formed in all parts of the country. Only Protestants were at first enrolled, and the local associations were almost invariably headed by prominent landlords. The Duke of Leinster commanded the Volunteers in Dublin; Lord Charlemont in Co. Armagh,

<sup>1</sup> *England in the Eighteenth Century*, IV. 483.

## THE VOLUNTEERS

Lord Altamont in Co. Mayo; and in Co. Down the volunteer force—known as the ‘Ards Independents’—was raised and commanded by Robert Stewart, henceforth, until his elevation to the peerage, known as Colonel Stewart.

The new movement was watched with some apprehension by the Government. The Volunteer body, though entirely loyal to the British Crown, was also entirely independent of the Irish Executive. Many of its leaders, including Colonel Stewart, adhered politically to the Opposition and almost all were in favour of Free Trade and Legislative Independence for Ireland. The Volunteers were, consequently, something more than a military force. The closest parallel to their position is to be found in Cromwell’s New Model Army. Like the Ironsides they had their ‘*adjutators*’ and could speak through a political Convention regularly elected on a representative basis. The numbers of the Volunteers rose rapidly, ultimately reaching a total of nearly 100,000.

The demand for reform, backed by a perfectly disciplined army, led by men of unquestioned loyalty to the Crown, was not to be resisted by a British Government, engaged in a desperate fight against half the world. In 1779, on the anniversary of the birthday of William III, the Volunteers paraded round his monument in Dublin and two adjacent cannon bore a placard with the significant inscription ‘Free Trade or this’.

The British Government wisely preferred the first alternative. In 1779–80 a series of measures was passed through the British Parliament to remove all the more oppressive commercial restrictions and to concede a large measure of ‘Free Trade’. In 1780 the Irish Dissenters were relieved of the sacramental test imposed on them by an Act of 1704.

There remained the question of 'Home Rule'. The demand for it became vociferous. On February 15 1782, delegates from 143 corps of Ulster Volunteers assembled in uniform in the great Church of Dungannon, and there passed with enthusiastic unanimity a series of resolutions drafted by Henry Grattan, in co-operation with Lord Charlemont and Flood. The most significant affirmed that 'a claim of any body of men other than the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland to make laws to bind this Kingdom is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance'. Hardly less significant was a resolution affirming the satisfaction of these Ulster Protestants at the 'relaxation of the penal laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects'.

The battle was won. In 1775 Henry Grattan had been brought into the Irish Parliament by Lord Charlemont. To him, as Ireland's greatest orator, was entrusted in 1782 an Amendment to the address. Outside the Parliament House a great body of Volunteers were drawn up: it was 'through their parted ranks that Grattan passed', as Lecky says, 'to move the emancipation of his country.' The Amendment asserted that while the Crown of Ireland was inseparably united to that of England, Ireland was by right a distinct Kingdom and that her King, Lords and Commons and these alone had a right to bind Ireland.'

The Amendment was carried. Great Britain, barely emerging from the disastrous war with the American Colonies, was in no mood to resist its implications; but to give effect to them legislation was required both in the British and the Irish Parliament. An Act of the British Parliament (22 George III, c. 51, A.D. 1782) repealed the Statute of 6 *George I* and 'all the declarations and matters therein contained.'

To the victory thus achieved many concurrent circumstances contributed: England's preoccupation in North

## LEGISLATIVE INDEPENDENCE

America and India; the great European coalition to which the American colonies owed their independence, and the persistent efforts of the new 'Irish' Party. Credit for the final triumph of that Party must perhaps be divided between Henry Grattan, with his impassioned eloquence, and the disciplined force of the Volunteers. But Thomas Davis's doggerel undoubtedly represented prevailing opinion as to the balance between them:

When Grattan rose none dared oppose  
The claims he made for freedom;  
They knew our swords to back his words  
Were ready did he need them.  
Remember still through good and ill,  
How vain were prayers and tears,  
How vain were words till flashed the swords  
Of the Irish volunteers.

The more suspicious members of the 'Irish' Party were not, however, satisfied with the 'simple repeal' of *6 George I.* Flood, sharing their suspicions, gave powerful expression to their apprehensions.

He argued, with some show of logic, that it was not enough to repeal a 'declaratory' Act. That left the claims previously put forward by England intact. Grattan, more generous but less logical than Flood, hotly opposed any further demand, and the Irish Parliament refused the malcontents leave to introduce a Bill. Ireland had already asserted, England had 'irrevocably and finally acknowledged' the exclusive right of the Irish Parliament to legislate for Ireland. Let that suffice.

Nevertheless, the British Parliament passed a Renunciation Act (23 George III, c. 28, A.D. 1783) declaring that the right claimed by Ireland was 'established and ascertained for ever.'

There remained, however, the Irish Statute which made Irish legislation subject to the English Privy



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Council. The relevant portions of Poynings' Law were, accordingly, repealed (1782) in the Irish Parliament.

Thus did Ireland achieve Legislative Independence. What 'independence' meant the next chapter will disclose.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE 'GRATTAN CONSTITUTION'— CASTLEREAGH AND REFORM

ON 20 January 1791, Robert Stewart took his seat in a Parliament which for nine years had in law enjoyed complete legislative independence.

The enjoyment was not unqualified. Under the most favourable conditions the Constitution known to history as Grattan's would have been difficult to work. Ireland was now connected with England only through the Crown. The sole legal link was supplied by the requirement that Irish legislation must receive the assent of the King, given under the Great Seal of Great Britain, which remained, of course, in the custody of the Lord Chancellor of England. Personal union is the most fragile of all the varieties of the Composite State. Within recent years we have witnessed the fracture of that slender tie in the case of Norway and Sweden (1908) and in that of Austria and Hungary (1918). A similar tie between Denmark and the Duchies of Sleswig and Holstein, though it had subsisted for centuries, was broken in 1863. The difficulties likely to arise in the case of Ireland were not unforeseen in 1782; but, in characteristic English fashion the warnings uttered by the far-seeing were ignored.

The root difficulty was constitutional. The Irish Parliament, though in a legislative sense equal and co-ordinate with that of Great Britain, was in fact dependent for the execution of its decrees upon Ministers

responsible not to itself but to the Cabinet in Great Britain. The Irish Executive was mainly in the hands of the Lord Lieutenant, his Chief Secretary, and the Lord Chancellor of Ireland. They were as a rule Englishmen, appointed by and responsible to the English Ministry, on whose instructions they acted, and on whose parliamentary fortunes their own were dependent. For the rest it would be difficult to improve on Grattan's epigram. Ireland, he said, was still governed by 'responsible officers who were not resident and resident officers who were not responsible'.

Nor was the Irish Parliament in any sense representative of the Irish people. Down to 1793 it was elected exclusively by Protestants, and only by a fraction of them. Out of the 300 members of the House of Commons, 234 sat for 'boroughs', and of these 200 were elected by 100 individuals. Lord Shannon nominated 16, the Ponsonbys 14, the Hills 9, and the Duke of Leinster 7. The freeholders exercised more independence in the counties as was manifest by the return of Robert Stewart in Co. Down. But the county members were hopelessly outnumbered by the nominees of the borough proprietors. That similar anomalies prevailed in Great Britain was true but not consolatory to the Irish reformers.

Among these the young member for Co. Down soon became conspicuous. He had good reason to appreciate the necessity for drastic reform. Had it not cost his father £60,000 to wrest one seat from the all-powerful Hills in Co. Down? But his views on the question were not limited to his personal experience. 'We have a House of Commons', he wrote in 1792, 'in the returning of which the people exercise but a small share of power, upon whose conduct they have no control of any sort. . . . The majority are either the pensioned servants of the Crown, or the servile

followers of great parliamentary chieftains.' Castlereagh did not exaggerate. The ever-expanding charge for pensions—already exceeding £100,000 a year, the creation of jobs in return for votes, were among the more flagrant scandals of the time. 'The system of Irish government after the declaration of independence probably became more profligate than ever: the Castle contended with its increased difficulties by an increase of bribery; the country, nominally independent, was in fact a dependency governed by corruption and intrigue.' Such was the judgement of Mr. Goldwin Smith. 'It is impossible', wrote Castlereagh to his (step-) grandfather, Lord Camden, 'not to admit the imperfections of the Constitution, and it is a bad reason to give for preserving them that the people of Ireland are not fit to be entrusted with the freedom Great Britain enjoys lest they might misuse it, that the connection between the two countries must be preserved by abuse, and that they must be contented to live in subordination and corruption.'<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh was seemingly unaware that in the matter of 'corruption' there was little to choose between the two Parliaments. As for 'subordination' there was, as he soon came to perceive, but one way of getting rid of it—a Legislative Union.

Nevertheless, the year 1793 witnessed the enactment of a measure of the first importance. With little opposition an Act was passed for removing most of the remaining disabilities under which the Catholics still suffered. Almost all Civil offices were thrown open to them; they were to be allowed to bear commissions in the army and navy; to carry arms; to serve as magistrates and on juries; and to obtain University degrees. Above all, they were admitted to the parliamentary franchise though they continued to be ineligible for election to Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted *ap.* Hyde, p. 87.

## CASTLEREAGH

The principle of parliamentary reform was strongly advocated by Castlereagh. Depend upon it, he wrote to his uncle, Lord Bayham, 'you must change your system with respect to Ireland; there is no alternative, now her independence is admitted, but to govern her by reason or *unite her to Great Britain by force*. A middle path will not do. A Government of gross corruption—for it is not a Government of influence—extinguishing every possibility of parliamentary authority will no longer be quietly endured. . . . It would require less force to unite the two Kingdoms than to govern as heretofore.' Castlereagh's advocacy of reform was, however, limited to Protestant Ireland. To the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics he was definitely opposed. 'The Protestants may be conciliated at the same time as the Constitution is improved; the Catholics never can by any concession which must not sooner or later tear down the Church or make the State their own. . . . With a reformed representation and a Catholic constituency must not everything shortly follow? Can the Protestant Church remain the establishment of a State of which they do not comprise an eighth part, which will be the case when the Catholics are coequal in political rights? . . . give them anything rather than the franchise' (26 January 1793).<sup>1</sup>

Thus did Castlereagh foresee and predict the future with a sagacity remarkable in a man of four-and-twenty. But all Pitt's influence was thrown into the opposite scale; the Bill was carried and 30,000 Catholics were immediately enfranchised.

No Catholic could, however, be elected to serve in the House of Commons. Thus, while the franchise was conferred upon the Catholic electors, they could not exercise it in favour of a co-religionist—however respectable or respected. The Catholic tenants had the

<sup>1</sup> Hyde, p. 100.

vote; the Catholic landlords were excluded from Parliament. The electorate was predominantly Catholic; the Legislature was exclusively Protestant.

A more glaring case of political ineptitude it would be difficult to discover. Sure if not swift was the nemesis. All that Castlereagh predicted came to pass. A full generation was to elapse before the blunder was repaired. Not until 1829 were the Catholic electors free to vote for their natural leaders. It was too late. The Catholic aristocracy never regained, or acquired, the political influence enjoyed for two centuries by the English squirearchy. Before a Catholic could enter Parliament, the Catholic electors had learned to look elsewhere for leadership.

For the moment, however, the Reform Act of 1793 was accepted as a token of the anxiety of the Irish Parliament, as well as of the English Government, to remedy some of the more glaring anomalies of the Grattan Constitution.

Hardly less important than the position of the Catholics under that Constitution were the commercial relations of Great Britain and Ireland.

Pitt would have liked to see the Irish Parliament reformed on a Protestant basis: like Castlereagh he regarded Catholic Emancipation as a safe concession only if made by a united Legislature, only if and when the Protestant Establishment in Ireland could count on the protection of an Imperial Parliament representative of both countries. But as an ardent disciple of Adam Smith he was more immediately interested in the condition of Irish trade. Ireland was at that time (1784) suffering from acute commercial distress: food was exceedingly dear and there was much unemployment. The cry for protection against English manufactures grew louder and louder. The Irish Parliament refused to impose it but voted an address to the King (13 May

1784) asking, with many protestations of gratitude and loyalty, for 'a wise and well-digested plan for a liberal arrangement of commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland'. Pitt, now (1784) securely entrenched behind a parliamentary majority, was in cordial agreement with the expressed wishes of the Irish Parliament. He was convinced that the root of the Irish grievance was economic, that the worst crime of Ireland was her poverty. But in his eagerness to promote the commercial prosperity of Ireland he was not forgetful of the interests of England. 'The line to which my mind at present inclines', he wrote (7 October 1784), '*. . . is to give Ireland an almost unlimited comminution of commercial advantages if we can receive in return some security that her strength and riches will be our benefit and that she will contribute from time to time in their increasing proportions to the common exigencies of the Empire.*'

Accordingly, in 1784, Pitt reduced to a series of resolutions a plan by which Ireland, in return for a contribution to the Navy and to the defence of the Empire, was to obtain complete freedom of trade with England, and England with Ireland. 'For the future', wrote Pitt, 'the two countries will be to the most essential purposes united.' With some modification the resolutions were, in February 1785 carried, with Grattan's help, through the Irish Parliament. But when they were submitted to the British Parliament a storm of opposition arose, chiefly from the cotton manufacturers. No fewer than 63 petitions against them were presented to Parliament: one, from Lancashire, contained 80,000 signatures.

Pitt, having been compelled somewhat to modify his scheme to meet the views of English manufacturers, carried it through the English Parliament. It was, however, bitterly opposed by Fox, Burke and Sheridan

## PITT'S COMMERCIAL PROPOSITIONS

who exerted their unrivalled powers to excite the jealousy and apprehensions of Ireland. The scheme, said Fox, bound Ireland to impose 'restraints undefined, unspecified and uncertain at the arbitrary demand of another State'. 'I will not', he added, 'barter English commerce for Irish slavery; that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase.'

The Irish Parliament, already suspicious, took fresh alarm. They saw in the scheme a subtle and subterranean attempt to neutralize the political concessions of 1782 and 1783. Pitt's plan was inspired not by concern for Ireland's prosperity, but by jealousy of Ireland's independence!

'By this Bill', said Grattan, 'we are to covenant that the Parliament of Ireland shall subscribe whatever laws the Parliament of England shall prescribe. . . . Pass this Bill and you are not the representatives of Ireland, but the register of the British Parliament.' His opposition prevailed; the Bill was dropped; and on the night when its abandonment was announced Dublin was brilliantly illuminated.

Pitt was deeply chagrined. He had risked his popularity in England in order to confer a great benefit on Ireland, only to find his motives misconstrued, his good faith impugned. Commercial union, good for England, was, he was convinced, essential to Ireland; but it was plain that it could not be imposed on an independent and reluctant Legislature. From that moment, there is little doubt, Pitt's mind turned in the direction of a Legislative Union. Political union as he began to see—as young Castlereagh was also beginning to see—was the only possible solution for the commercial problem; it alone could guarantee the continuance of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland; only a united Parliament could safely complete the work of Catholic emancipation.

Castlereagh's position was a peculiar one. In Dublin



he was regarded, and quite justly, as an active member of the Opposition. "Take my word for it", wrote the Chief Secretary to the English Secretary of State, 'he is a decided enemy of the King's Government in Ireland; and perhaps a more dangerous one from the circumstances of his English political connections being such as to warrant his *professing* himself a warm friend of Mr. Pitt's Administration in England' (22 February 1792). It was not mere profession. Castlereagh's conduct was partly inspired, no doubt, by tactical considerations. 'Would there be any harm in your professing yourself a friend of the Pitt Administration in England though you are in opposition to the Castle?' Such was the shrewd suggestion of Lord Camden at the outset of his grandson's parliamentary career. Castlereagh took the hint: the more readily that it coincided with his own convictions. Those convictions were evident even in his maiden speech. Speaking on Grattan's motion for an inquiry into the position of Ireland, in reference to the East India trade, he expressed the hope that the House would vote on it 'not with a spirit of local partiality, but as a member of the British Empire' (27 February 1792). In a like spirit he wrote a year later to the Secretary of the Northern Whig Club: 'As to my propensities being *quite too English* my reply is that I should feel exceedingly degraded in my own estimation were I selfish or base enough in any instance to sacrifice the one to the other. Infinite as my attachment is to Ireland, I trust that, when reasoning upon their relative duties and common concerns, my heart is sufficiently enlarged to discuss every question with the feelings which become a member of the Empire. I trust I shall never be an Irishman in contradistinction to the justice due to Britain, nor an Englishman as opposing and betraying the interests of this country.' 'I have', he went on, 'observed the temper and the

turn of mind of this country long enough to discover one truth: that if we wish to preserve internal harmony and external respectability, above all it is necessary to remain connected with Great Britain. . . . The Fleet of England is in my opinion the charter by which we hold [our] commerce.' <sup>1</sup> It is difficult to know whether to admire most the soundness of these views, the courage with which they are expounded, or the maturity of judgement to which they testify. To the last day of his life Castlereagh consistently adhered to the views expressed in youth.

Castlereagh's political position was soon to be subjected to a crucial test. Were his views on the British Empire, on the connection between Great Britain and Ireland reconcilable with the existence of two co-ordinate Parliaments, with the Legislative independence of the Parliament in College Green?

The constitutional position of the 'Grattan Parliament' was, indeed, sufficiently complicated and contradictory. Nevertheless, the experiment might, under the application of appropriate amendments, have succeeded if circumstances had been more favourable, had the times been less unquiet. The outbreak of the revolution in France foredoomed it to failure. That world-shaking event was bound to have repercussions in Ireland. Not that parallel conditions in the two countries were to produce similar results. Quite otherwise. But notwithstanding contrasted conditions, if revolution was 'in the air', the infection was certain to reach Ireland. It had reached Protestant Ireland from Puritan America a decade earlier. It was now to reach Catholic and Celtic Ireland from Catholic and Celtic France. A channel of communications was provided by the Association of United Irishmen, not in its origin exclusively or predominantly Catholic, but ultimately depending for

<sup>1</sup> Hyde, pp. 92-3.

support in its later and revolutionary activities, on the Catholic peasantry.

From the first Castlereagh formed a remarkably clear and accurate judgement on events in France. He watched their development at close quarters, visiting Belgium and Paris in 1791, and Belgium again in 1792. Unlike the *émigrés* with whom he mingled at Spa he had no illusions as to the possibility of restoring the *ancien régime*. That had gone for ever. But neither did he believe that the 'fervour of popular spirit' would long survive the inevitable disappointment of over-sanguine expectations. He was greatly impressed by the self-confidence and the 'inconceivable fluency' of the members of the National Assembly—wholly new though they were to political life. By observation and inquiry he obtained exact information as to changes wrought in the first three years of the Revolution and passed on them a judgement remarkably balanced and mature for a young man in the early twenties. He accurately apprehended the economic results certain to ensue on the devaluation of the currency and the issue of *assignats*, and, while finding in the Revolution 'much to approve and much to condemn', he expressed the hope that 'no country in which I have either stake or affection will follow their example'.

There was, indeed, already ground for apprehension. The 14th of July, the anniversary of the capture of the Bastille, was celebrated in Belfast with boisterous enthusiasm. A few months later (September 1791) there appeared *An Argument on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland* by 'A Northern Whig'. The writer of this brilliant pamphlet, Theodore Wolfe Tone (1763-98), was a young Protestant lawyer who, after a runaway marriage with a young lady of fortune, deserted the Bar for revolutionary politics. Hatred of England was 'so deeply rooted' in his nature that 'it was rather an instinct than

a principle'. He passionately desired to see Ireland independent, preferably under a Republic;<sup>1</sup> the Grattan compromise he disdained. 'The Revolution of 1782 was', he wrote, 'the most bungling, imperfect business that ever threw ridicule on a lofty epithet by assuming it unworthily.' On 18 October 1791, Wolfe Tone and his friends founded at Belfast the Society of United Irishmen. A second branch of the Society was soon afterwards formed at Dublin with Napper Tandy (1740-1803), a small Dublin tradesman who had developed a taste for political agitation, as its secretary. Mr. Lecky has attempted to show that the new Society was 'at first constituted for the simple purpose of forming a political union of Protestants and Catholics, and thus obtaining a liberal measure of parliamentary reform'.<sup>2</sup> That many Whigs, loyal to the Grattan Constitution, joined the Society under this impression is true; but Castlereagh was not, as is commonly asserted, among them. Well was it that he withheld his support for the Memoirs of Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald make it abundantly clear that the secret object of the leaders of the new movement was from the outset, not reform but revolution.<sup>3</sup>

'To subvert the tyranny of our execrable Government, to break the connection with England (the never-failing source of all our political evils), and to assert the independence of my country, unite the whole people of Ireland, these were my objects . . . to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter, these were my means.' Such were the words confided by Wolfe Tone to his journal. Before long, the objects were avowed.

<sup>1</sup> Wolfe Tone: *Memoirs*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> VI. 466. *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. in particular Wolfe Tone, *Memoirs*: II. 371, 378; Moore, Fitzgerald, *Memoirs*, I. 165.

## CHAPTER V

### CASTLEREAGH, CHIEF SECRETARY— THE FRENCH REPUBLIC AND THE IRISH REBELLION

THE intervention of Great Britain in the war against the French Republic (February 1793) created a new situation in Ireland. The Irish Establishment, which was independent of the British Establishment, was immediately raised by 5,000 men, the Volunteers were disbanded (11 March 1793), and the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill was immediately followed by the enactment of a Militia Act for the formation, on the English model, of a Militia for home defence in Ireland. Thus, as has been pertinently observed, 'the Catholic was entrusted, almost at the same moment, with arms and with voting power, but the expectation in both cases was that he would use both these weapons under the direction of his landlord'.<sup>1</sup> Sixteen thousand men were promptly recruited by ballot for four years' home service, and in the course of the war the number was raised to 20,000–25,000. The Colonel Commandant of each regiment was appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, and the Colonel appointed his officers who had to possess a property qualification ranging from £20 a year for ensigns to £2,000 a year for the Colonel Commandant. The *Militia Act* was not popular but was supported both by Grattan and by Castlereagh, who accepted a Commission as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Londonderry Militia, and personally superintended the enrolment and training of recruits.

<sup>1</sup> D.A. Chart: *English Historical Review*, XXXII, p. 505.

During the next five years Castlereagh took his military duties very seriously. Of the disbandment of the Volunteers he wrote: 'Of late the danger from them has been imminent. They were in the hands of low men who arrayed them avowedly for the purpose of intimidating Government into a reform. They were providing themselves with ammunition and might have been led into any excess by their Jacobin leaders.'<sup>1</sup> At the same time Castlereagh was exceedingly anxious that the new Militia should be 'effectually and respectably established'. He did all that one man could do to realize that hope, but, for reasons which will appear, with only partial success.

The following year (1794) was marked by events of first-rate importance both in the private and in the public life of Lord Castlereagh. On June 9 he was married in London to Lady Amelia Hobart, daughter of the Earl of Buckinghamshire who, from 1776 to 1780, had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The bride was beautiful, amiable and well dowered, and the marriage, though childless, secured to Castlereagh unbroken domestic felicity until the day of his death. A month earlier the bridegroom had been returned, on Pitt's nomination, as member for the Cornish borough of Tregony, a seat which had for a short time been held by his great-grandfather Sir Robert Cowan, and more recently by his uncle, Lord Hugh Seymour. In 1796, however, the Indian 'nabob' who owned Tregony put it up for sale. Castlereagh was not a purchaser, but fortunately found another seat at Orford, a pocket borough in the gift of his uncle, Lord Hertford. Pocket boroughs, then, had their use, as Pitt himself had every reason to know, in bringing young men possessed of more brains than money into the House of Commons. Castlereagh held Orford only for about twelve months. On accepting office in Ireland he vacated his English seat and did not

<sup>1</sup> To Camden, 17 April 1793, Alison: I. 20.

offer himself for re-election. When he re-entered the Palace of Westminster (1801) it was as member for Co. Down in the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Between 1794 and 1801 much had happened in Ireland, in England, and in Europe.

Under the pressure of war Party, differences are apt to be assuaged. In July 1794 a large body of Whigs decided to sever the ties with their own Party and give their support to Pitt's Administration. Among the leaders for whom places were found in the Coalition Government were the Duke of Portland, an ex-Prime Minister and ex-Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Fitzwilliam and Lord Spencer. Portland became a third Secretary of State with charge over the Home Department (including Ireland) and Fitzwilliam superseded Lord Westmorland as Lord Lieutenant. The Whigs appear to have understood that they were to have 'the general management and superintendence of Ireland' (the words are Fitzwilliam's), with a view to 'an entire change of system' in that country. Pitt himself did not so understand the terms of his bargain with his allies. On the contrary, it was expressly agreed at a conference between Pitt and his new colleagues that there was to be no change of measures or men in Ireland.

Lord Fitzwilliam, however, had already committed himself to Grattan. He was a man of generous impulses but of tactless and overbearing character, and immediately on his arrival in Dublin (4 January 1795) he proceeded to dismiss Beresford, Pitt's confidential agent in the Castle, and other important officials. It was known that he meant to remove Fitzgibbon (afterwards Earl of Clare), the Lord Chancellor and the most powerful man in the Irish Government, and by the dismissal of other adherents of Pitt to find places for the two Ponsonbys, the most prominent of the Irish Whigs. Consternation reigned at the Castle. But when Parlia-

ment met (22 January) the Address, moved by Grattan and seconded by Castlereagh, pledged the Irish Parliament to whole-hearted support of the war against France. Among the people at large there was, indeed, as Castlereagh had reported to his (step-) grandfather, 'some misapprehension which ought to be dispelled.' 'They imagine', he wrote, 'that England was the first aggressor—that she is united with all the despots of Europe to enslave France. . . . They believe that France anxiously desires peace, and is disposed to observe it when made.' Nevertheless, he wrote hopefully of the 'situation [which] has greatly changed within the last two years . . . for the better. The turbulent spirit of the people no longer agitated by Conventionism and volunteer associations has sensibly abated. The militia army is faithful and efficient. There is but one feeling towards England and scarcely a dissentient in the House of Commons as to the original necessity of the war and its present vigorous prosecution.'

Vigorous prosecution of the war was not, however, likely to be promoted by alienating all the best friends of England in Ireland. On 19 February, Fitzwilliam was recalled and replaced by Castlereagh's uncle who had just succeeded his distinguished father as second Earl Camden. The second Earl, though a conscientious and industrious man, had neither the character nor the brains of the first.

The task to which he succeeded was as difficult and thankless as it was important. Fitzwilliam's recall, though rendered inevitable by his own tactlessness and impetuosity, had a disastrous effect upon the situation in Ireland. Taken together with the rejection of Grattan's Catholic Relief Bill (May 1795), which Castlereagh felt bound to oppose, it played into the hands of the extreme section of the United Irishmen.

Great efforts, as already noted, were made at the



time, and have persisted to this day, to prove that the United Irishmen changed its character as a result of the recall of Fitzwilliam and 'the indemnified violations of law in the north'; that down to 1795 the Society was not treasonable nor revolutionary, but existed to promote, by constitutional means, Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary Reform. That view is no longer tenable. Wolfe Tone's words, already quoted, contradict it, and there is abundant evidence to the same effect. The real motive of the Committee which in strict secrecy controlled the movement, was the establishment of an independent Hibernian Republic, perhaps in association with the French Republic.

From 1795 onwards that object was hardly concealed, and its avowal caused the disintegration of the Association. Disintegration led to conflict between the creeds. In September 1795 a serious fight took place between Catholics and Protestants in a village called The Diamond in Co. Armagh. That same night there was formed a Lodge of the Orange Association, to defend the Protestant Faith. Whether or not it was the first of its kind matters little. From that time onwards the Orange Association became a power in Ulster, and supplied many recruits for the Militia, and still more, later on, for the Yeomanry. The necessity of authorizing a new force more reliable than the Militia had by now become a matter of anxious consideration by the Lord Lieutenant. In August 1796 Viscount Castlereagh<sup>1</sup> made a systematic investigation into the condition of Ulster. The result was alarming. 'I can have no doubt', he wrote to Chief-Secretary Pelham, 'that there does exist a very serious affiliated conspiracy in the northern counties. Belfast

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of lucidity 'Castlereagh' has been already used generally instead of 'Robert Stewart the Younger' in the preceding narrative: but only on his father's elevation to an Earldom in 1796 did he become by courtesy entitled to that designation.

is its centre, it is very general towards Lisburn, the county of Antrim has been largely infected and the county of Down [where his father's estates were mostly situated] is by no means exempt. . . . The Societies [of United Irishmen] gain ground rapidly and . . . have formed very sanguine and extensive hopes in consequence of the fatal turn events have taken on the Continent' (23 Aug. 1796).

The local gentry pressed for permission to enrol yeomanry volunteers. The Government hesitated to sanction the step. But Castlereagh was convinced, albeit unwillingly, of its necessity. 'Strong as the objections are to irregular corps in a country so lately extricated from their danger, yet I do not think it will be possible for Government without losing friends to resist the eagerness of gentlemen in districts disturbed and threatened with disturbances to be permitted to arm for their own defence under Commissions from the Crown . . .' Such was Castlereagh's considered advice tendered to a 'Cabinet' to which Lord Camden specially summoned him. The Home Secretary gave his consent, and on September 19 the scheme was officially announced. The Yeomanry, though a volunteer force, was paid. The estimate first presented to Parliament was for 20,000 men, but within six months 37,000 men were enrolled, and by 1803, when the movement reached its apex, there were no fewer than 769 corps of yeomen with an enrolment of 75,650 men. The primary object of the new force was the preservation of internal security, while the Regulars and the Militia defended the country against foreign invasion. That the Yeomanry should have been recruited more and more exclusively from Protestants was regrettable, but, under the circumstances, inevitable.

The enrolment of the Yeomanry was quickly followed by other measures of precaution. In October, Parlia-

ment suspended the Habeas Corpus Act and passed various Acts for the preservation of order. Castlereagh, meanwhile, was busy in the north. In September he took a leading part in the arrest of the rebel executive in Ulster and before the year ended had induced no fewer than 1700 men on his father's estates to take the oath of allegiance. The Lord Lieutenant reported to the Home Secretary with great satisfaction his nephew's success. 'He has conducted himself with infinite skill, ability and spirit . . . and has done more to bring those persons who had been attempted to be corrupted to a proper sense of reflection, and to punish those who are guilty than perhaps any man in the north of Ireland' (13 December 1796).

It was, however, in the south that immediate danger threatened. A French fleet had been sighted off Bantry Bay, and to Co. Cork, accordingly, Castlereagh hurried at the head of his Militia regiment. By Christmas Day they had reached Charleville, and arrived at Cork on December 29 only to find (as Castlereagh wrote to his wife) that 'the wind has saved us the trouble of driving the French away. There is not a ship left in Bantry Bay' . . .

So it was. Wolfe Tone and his friends had at last persuaded the French Directory to send a well-equipped expedition to Ireland. On December 16 forty-three ships sailed from Brest with 15,000 of the best soldiers France could furnish under the command of General Hoche, an officer then regarded as second only, if second, to General Buonaparte. Wolfe Tone was on board with a Commission as Chef de Brigade to General Hoche. By December 22 thirty-five ships had reached Bantry Bay. No attempt, however, was made to land the troops. On Christmas Day a gale sprang up: six ships foundered; two were captured; the rest were scattered by the tempest; the expedition straggled home.

As in 1588 *Deus afflavit et dissipati sunt*. Ireland was saved partly by the unaccountable inaction of the French commander, and partly by the Heaven-sent gale. But the Irish Executive, splendidly backed by Castlereagh, must have the credit of having paralysed the revolutionary movement at home by the sudden arrest of the head-centre of the United Irishmen. All the threads of the conspiracy were in the hands of this secret Directory of five members, whose identity was most carefully concealed. But the Secret Service of the Government was efficient, and the net closed round the leaders before the rank and file knew who those leaders were. Nevertheless, had the French troops landed, Cork must have surrendered, and the surrender of Cork might well have lighted the flames of insurrection from south to north and west to east.

Castlereagh was under no illusions as to the narrow margin by which his country had escaped a civil war, sustained on the one side by the greatest military power in Europe. In February 1797 he carried a motion for an increase of the Militia and outlined a scheme for improvements in its organization. At the same time he paid a high tribute to the services of the Militia when engaged in 'a species of duty most trying to their feelings, being chiefly employed against their misguided and lawless countrymen; yet', he added, 'their alacrity and loyalty were as conspicuously manifested on such unpleasant occasions, as their ardour and bravery were gloriously displayed on their march to meet the invading enemy.'

Ulster, despite Castlereagh's efforts, remained the centre of danger and disaffection, and in March, General (afterwards Viscount) Lake—a soldier who had already won distinction in America and was to win still more in India—was invested with extraordinary powers, and ordered to disarm all persons who did not bear His

Majesty's commission. This meant in effect martial law in Ulster. Guided by admirably precise information, sometimes extorted by means which only the end could justify, Lake in a short time was able to report the seizure of 72 cannon, 50,000 muskets and 30,000 pikes—eloquent testimony to the maturity of the preparations for rebellion. The disarmament effected its purpose; Ulster gave comparatively little trouble in future.

A similar task in the south was entrusted to General Sir Ralph Abercromby, a fine soldier but less fitted than Lake for the unpleasant duty assigned to him. Abercromby declared that the troops put under his command were a terror to no one but themselves, and he declined, with such instruments, to carry out the disarmament of Munster. He was accordingly superseded by Lake who carried out an odious task by methods the ferocity of which was only partially redeemed by the results immediately attained, and by the splendid services subsequently rendered by the General to the British cause in India. The only possible excuse for the barbarities practised (and suffered) by the Yeomanry in the south is that Ireland was in fact saved from the horrors of a prolonged and devastating civil war.

The matter was raised in the Irish Parliament which met for what was destined to be its last session in January 1798. The official reply to critics was effectively delivered by Castlereagh who, in July of the previous year, had been appointed Keeper of the King's Signet (Privy Seal), and in October had been sworn of the Privy Council. Pelham, the Chief Secretary, was a sick man and an absentee; most of his work devolved on Castlereagh who was appointed Acting Chief Secretary in March 1798, and on Pelham's definitive resignation in November succeeded to the vacant office.

With the greatest difficulty were the King and his

Ministers in Whitehall induced to assent to Castlereagh's appointment. It was against all precedent that an Irishman should hold the office of Chief Secretary. But young as was Castlereagh, he had earned promotion by his outstanding services to the Irish Executive. Camden had insisted that his appointment, *ad interim*, was 'indispensable in the present situation of the country', and roundly told Pitt that he could not carry on without him. Lord Cornwallis, who in June 1798 succeeded Lord Camden as Lord Lieutenant, was almost equally insistent. Though admitting his disqualification as an Irishman, he pleaded that an exception should be made in his favour on the ground that he was 'so very unlike an Irishman'.

No testimonial could have been more damning to Castlereagh's reputation. But if irrelevant in the immediate connection, it was true. Castlereagh was an Ulster Scot with all the splendid, if not invariably attractive, endowments of his race. Infinitely courageous, painstaking and persistent in pursuit of essential ends, he had no trace of histrionic ability, none of the fluency in speech and readiness in jest commonly associated with the typical Irishman. But for the tasks immediately ahead—the suppression of a dangerous rebellion, the courageous and clear-sighted acceptance of its inevitable consequence, and the skilful conduct of the necessary legislation through the Irish Parliament—Castlereagh was by gifts and training uniquely qualified.

His first task was the suppression of the rebellion. 23 May 1798 was the date appointed by the conspirators for a general rising. It may be, as is commonly alleged, that they were rushed into premature action by the precautionary measures taken by the Government. The heads of the provincial directory of Leinster had been arrested on March 12, and on March 30 a Proclamation had been issued by the Lord Lieutenant and Council

ordering disarmament of 'all persons disaffected to His Majesty's Government by the most summary and effectual measures'. That Proclamation was the prelude to the work entrusted to Abercromby, but, as already described, performed by Lake. Castlereagh 'did everything in his power to stem the tide of bloodshed' and at the same time to provide 'an adequate national defence against the possibility of a French invasion as well as an internal rising'.<sup>1</sup> After the arrests of March 12 the supreme Directory was, however, reformed, and the leader destined for the command of the revolutionary forces in the field was still at large.

Of the figures in the Irish Rebellion the most romantic was Lord Edward Fitzgerald. A younger brother of the Duke of Leinster, Lord Edward was pre-eminently a Geraldine in temper as in race. Endowed with an unquenchable lust for adventure, he was an ardent advocate of equalitarian republicanism, and the principal envoy of the United Irishmen to the French Directory. After the *coup* of March 12 every opportunity was given to Lord Edward to escape from Ireland. He disdained to walk through the opened doors. A price (£1000) was put upon his head and on May 19 he was, after a desperate struggle, arrested in his bed. He flew upon his captors 'like a tiger and fell to stabbing them in a shocking manner' and mortally wounding Captain Ryan, but was at last disabled by a pistol shot. He died from his wounds in prison some weeks afterwards. Meanwhile his associates had been arrested (May 21), but despite that shattering blow the rebellion broke out on the appointed day. Only in Wexford, however, where the preparations of the Government were inadequate, did it attain serious proportions, and, even there, it was effectually quelled by Lake's victory at Vinegar Hill (21 June).

<sup>1</sup> Hyde: pp. 242-3.

## THE IRISH REBELLION

The back of the rebellion was, then, broken by the time Lord Cornwallis reached Dublin. The new Lord Lieutenant, in reporting on the situation to Whitehall, paid a handsome tribute to the services of his acting Chief Secretary. 'I should be very ungrateful', he wrote to Portland (8 July 1798) 'if I did not acknowledge the obligations which I owe to Lord Castlereagh, whose abilities, temper, and judgement have been of the greatest use to me, and who has, on every occasion shown his sincere and unprejudiced attachment to the general interests of the British Empire.' Moreover, he cordially supported Castlereagh against the 'Ginger Group' in the Castle, in his policy of clemency and pacification.

Only for the moment was that policy interrupted by a second attempt on the part of France to support the Irish rebellion. On August 22 1798, some 1,100 men under General Humbert effected without opposition a landing on the west coast at Killala. Some 4,000 men, mostly Militia and Yeomanry, were hastily collected to oppose their advance. They proved to be not merely undisciplined but disaffected, and the result was the shameless rout popularly known (from the town where the two forces met) as 'Castlebar races'. Cornwallis acted promptly. Collecting all the Regulars he could, he himself hurried to the West, surrounded the invaders, and received (8 September) their unconditional surrender. The 'Castlebar races' were, however, a sufficient indication of what might have happened in December 1796 had Hoche landed his 15,000 men in Co. Cork—a far more dangerous and strategically significant spot. There were other expeditions in the West on an even smaller scale than Humbert's. One of them commanded by Napper Tandy landed in Donegal, but the General got so drunk ashore that he had to be carried on board again, and ultimately escaped to the Continent where some years later he died.



A far more important leader was captured on board a French ship off Lough Swilly about the same time (October 1798). Carried in irons to Dublin, Wolfe Tone was tried by court-martial and sentenced to be hanged. His request to be shot as a soldier was refused, and he escaped the gallows only by suicide in his cell. For this misguided enthusiast a word of pity may be spared. That he was a sincere republican, a pure-hearted visionary, with no selfish purpose to serve, there is no reason to doubt. But it is equally certain that his success would have meant for Ireland prolonged suffering, and for England, at a crisis of her fate, very grave embarrassment.

The rebellion was at an end; but its ebullition and suppression were merely incidents, however important, in a situation of worldwide significance. It is in relation, then, to the world-situation that the conduct both of those who promoted and those who suppressed the rebellion must be judged. That the Irish people were entitled to use any means in their power to assert their independence of England, or to unite, if such was their preference, in fraternal bonds with the French Republic, is undeniable. Equally undeniable was the right of Great Britain to resist, with all the forces at her disposal, the attempt of Ireland to separate from Great Britain or to unite with France. For the successful resistance of Great Britain Lord Castlereagh was primarily responsible, and for that 'crime' (in the eyes of Irish nationalists), he was execrated at the moment, and has never since been forgiven. Rightly or wrongly Castlereagh was sincerely convinced, as the next chapter will disclose, that union with England was not less essential to Irish than to English interests. The rebellion, if successful, would have dissolved the connection. Castlereagh, therefore, was bound to strive his utmost that it should

#### CASTLEREAGH'S ACHIEVEMENT

not succeed. He strove to good effect. England's right arm was paralysed, but the rebellion was crushed. That the Irish Executive were compelled to use for its suppression irregular troops whose passions were inflamed by sectarian rancour, was regrettable but inevitable. The moment for the outbreak of the rebellion was not selected by Great Britain, or by her agents in Ireland. That the rebellion and its suppression were accompanied by unspeakable atrocities is true; but the blame does not rest on one side only. Least of all can it be charged to Castlereagh. Vile accusations were made against him, but every reputable authority now agrees that Castlereagh did his utmost to restrain the brutal methods of his agents. He repeatedly vindicated his own conduct in the matter both in the Irish House of Commons and subsequently in the Imperial Parliament. Not, however, until the last day of the session of 1817 was his final apology made and accepted in reply to an impeachment, led by Lord Brougham, of his whole Irish administration.

Castlereagh's defence was complete, and as regards his personal conduct was conclusive. He admitted that he had 'incurred the inextinguishable guilt' of preserving Ireland 'from that separation which the traitors of Ireland, in conjunction with a foreign power, had meditated'. Calumny had been persistently poured on his name and character, because he had defended 'the people of Ireland from the conspiracy which surrounded them'. 'My conduct', he proceeded, 'has been the constant theme of invective. But I think those who are acquainted with me will do me the justice to believe that I never had a cruel or an unkind heart.' . . . Cruelties had, indeed, been committed but 'they must fall on the heads of those who provoked that guilty and unnatural rebellion'. By the persecuted loyalists they were abhorred and will ever be deplored, but they had to use

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the only weapons at hand 'for the protection of their lives and properties against lawless force and violence'.

Canning, who had just rejoined the Government, wound up the debate with a brilliant vindication of his colleague, and the House endorsed it. Even Brougham, after Castlereagh's death, had the decency to retract his accusation and to acknowledge that 'Lord Castlereagh uniformly and strenuously set his face against the atrocities committed in Ireland; and that to him more than perhaps anyone else was to be attributed the termination of the system stained with blood.'

To him primarily must also be attributed the termination of the Constitutional experiment which had facilitated, though it had not caused, the insurrection. Under no circumstances could the 'Grattan Parliament' have long survived; the rebellion accelerated and sealed its doom.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LEGISLATIVE UNION—CASTLEREAGH, CORNWALLIS AND PITT

THE fact that the rebellion brought to an end the Grattan Parliament gave rise to a base calumny. Almost from the first the idea was disseminated that, in order to provide an excuse for the Union, Castlereagh and Pitt 'dragooned' Ireland into rebellion. 'Among the phantoms of hatred and suspicion which arose from this field of carnage [the rebellion] was the horrible idea that the English Government had intentionally stimulated the Irish people into rebellion in order to pave the way for the Union.' The words are Mr. Goldwin Smith's, and he adds: 'No evidence in support of this charge can be produced.'<sup>1</sup> Yet even so reputable—albeit so prejudiced—a writer as Dr. George Sigerson did not scruple to reiterate the charge. 'The administrators in the Castle', he wrote, 'with a view to render the Irish Parliament odious as well as contemptible, and to make Irishmen resign themselves to the idea of the Union, then proceeded to inflame sectarian rancour and to dragoon the country into rebellion.'<sup>2</sup> Somewhat less offensive but equally unfair was the accusation formulated against Pitt by Mr. Lecky: 'The steady object of his later Irish policy was to corrupt and degrade in order that he ultimately might destroy the Legislature

<sup>1</sup> *Irish History and Irish Character*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Two Centuries of Irish History* (ed. Bryce), p. 144.

of the country.’<sup>1</sup> The exact opposite is true. Pitt, like any other student of affairs, realized that the Constitutional experiment initiated in 1782 was a delicate and dangerous one. Under the most favourable circumstances the experiment might have proved unworkable. The circumstances were in fact exceedingly unfavourable. The quarrel between Grattan and Flood, the Regency Crisis of 1788, the failure of the Irish Parliament to reform itself in accord with the wise suggestion of Flood, or to admit Roman Catholics to the Legislature, as Grattan persistently advocated, the rigid determination of the ‘Ascendancy’ Party to retain a monopoly of power and office, the fanatical feud between Catholics and Protestants, the republican hopes excited by the French Revolution, the readiness of the French Republic to use Ireland as a catspaw in its duel with England and finally the Rebellion—all these things gravely militated against the success of an experiment difficult enough in quiet times, and in days so full of turmoil and strife hopelessly unworkable. Pitt, as we have seen, characteristically convinced himself that the root of the trouble in Ireland was economic, and he risked much to eradicate the trouble by his commercial propositions. Was this to degrade the Grattan Constitution, or to give the experiment, as he imagined, a better chance of success? Mr Lecky’s charge is as unfair as Dr Sigerson’s, and even more easy to rebut.

Pitt’s principal agents in Ireland, Cornwallis and Castlereagh, were as incapable as Pitt himself of disingenuous motive and of dishonourable conduct.

Like Pitt, Cornwallis and Castlereagh believed that there could be no permanent peace in Ireland until the work of Catholic Emancipation was completed by the

<sup>1</sup> *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, p. 146 (ed. 1871). In his *History of England* (1890) Lecky moderated his language, and perhaps his views, but cf. Vol. III, C.’s xxxi and xxxii.

admission of the Catholics to Parliament. Castlereagh was equally concerned about the future of the Established Church in Ireland. Only a united Parliament could at once do justice to the Catholics and preserve the Protestant Establishment. Castlereagh was, however, under no illusion about the difficulties to be surmounted before Union could be achieved. 'I see with you its difficulties and dangers in a strong point of view, but am discouraged by neither from looking to it as the only measure that can ever enable this country to act either upon a Protestant or Catholic principle with safety to the Constitution itself. As a distinct Kingdom our present system is not reconcilable to any principle upon which the human mind can or will rest quiet, which does not condemn our establishment in principle and consign them inevitably in a course of years to certain destruction. Whether the pride or good sense of the country will triumph it is a little difficult to calculate.' Castlereagh knew his Ireland intimately, and in this confidential letter to Pelham (4 October) he put his finger with unerring accuracy on the spot.<sup>1</sup> There were, as Castlereagh perceived, only two possible alternatives to Union: an Hibernian Republic under the protection of France, or a continuance of the existing Protestant oligarchy.

Neither alternative could be contemplated with equanimity or indeed without repulsion. To the achievement of Union, accordingly, he dedicated for the next two years all his ability and energy.

The Catholic question presented the crucial difficulty. To carry the Union against the determined opposition of the Catholic hierarchy and the Catholic people would have been, even for Castlereagh, a sheer impossibility. Yet the most ardent advocates of the Union, such as the Earl of Clare, were the most fanatical in

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Hyde; p. 281.

their opposition to any concession to the Catholics. They would have made the permanent exclusion of the Catholics a fundamental article of the Union. Pitt, Castlereagh and Cornwallis on the contrary would, if they could, have seen 'Emancipation' embodied as a fundamental in the 'Treaty'. Of exclusion they would not hear. 'I am determined', wrote Cornwallis (30 September), 'not to submit to the insertion of any clause that shall make the exclusion of the Catholics a fundamental part of the Union, as I am fully convinced that until the Catholics are admitted into a general participation of rights (which when incorporated with the British Government they cannot abuse) there will be no peace or safety in Ireland'.<sup>1</sup>

No sooner, however, did the rumour spread that a Legislative Union was in contemplation than almost the whole of Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike, bristled into resistance. The English ministers were—with the exception of Pitt and Dundas—dismayed by the apparent unanimity of Irish opinion, and it required the presence of Castlereagh in London (December 1798) to keep the Cabinet steadfast in pursuance of the policy of a union. It was on the occasion of this visit that Castlereagh was sworn a member of the English Privy Council (19 December), a striking testimony to the rapid advance of the young Irishman in the estimation of the Sovereign and the Prime Minister.

English ministers might well be discouraged when they learnt that many of the Irish ministers were actively opposing a union. The situation thus created was intolerable, and on the eve of the new session of the Irish Parliament, Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Exchequer, James Fitzgerald, Prime Serjeant, and a number of minor ministers, were dismissed from office and replaced by whole-hearted advocates of union.

<sup>1</sup> Correspondence, II. 417.

## UNION PROPOSED

The proposed union of the Legislatures was announced in the King's Speech to both Parliaments in January 1799. To the British Parliament Pitt submitted a series of resolutions which were carried with only 15 dissentients. In the Irish Parliament the Address in reply to the King's Speech was carried in the Lords by a majority of 35, but the abstentions were far more numerous than the voters. In the House of Commons the Address was carried after a debate of twenty-one hours by 106 votes to 105 (23 January). Paragraph X of the Address ran as follows:

'The unremitting activity with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of endeavouring to effect a separation of this Kingdom must engage our most earnest attention. And as Your Majesty has condescended to express an anxious hope that this circumstance, joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest, may dispose the Parliaments in both Kingdoms to provide the most effectual means of maintaining and improving a connexion essential to their common security, and of consolidating as far as possible into one firm and lasting fabric the strength, the power, and the resources of the British Empire, we shall not fail to give the fullest consideration to a communication of such momentous importance.' On the Report stage (24 January) Sir Laurence Parsons moved to omit this paragraph on the ground that it pledged the House indirectly to the principle of a union.

Amid great excitement the amendment, supported, among others, by George Ponsonby and the ex-Prime Serjeant Fitzgerald, was carried by 109 votes to 105.

For that session the scheme was killed. Castlereagh was no whit dismayed. He frequently and firmly reiterated the determination of the Government to carry the measure through, and expressed himself as



confident. 'I am persuaded', he wrote on February 4, 'firmness will carry the measure, and that within a reasonable time. The opposition is more of a private than a public nature, though the local clamour of Dublin gives it a popular aspect.'

The local clamour was indeed vociferous. All classes in Dublin were resolute in opposition to a measure which would reduce a proud and brilliant capital to the position of a provincial city. The Corporation, the bankers, the merchants, the tradesmen, the citizens at large were all united in detestation of the union, but its most determined and most eloquent opponents were the lawyers of the Four Courts. 'The bar', wrote Castlereagh, 'continues to feel most warmly about it.' Hardly less opposed to it, at the outset, than Dublin, were the great landlords who owned many of the boroughs, and the Corporations of the smaller towns. But their opposition was less obdurate, and, in view of the compensation given to vested interests, was ultimately withdrawn.

During the long recess, 1799-1800, Castlereagh spared no effort to conciliate opponents and to convert the half-hearted into staunch supporters. With the Protestants he could do little; but the Roman Catholics were on the whole persuaded to acquiescence, and in some important cases to positive, if not enthusiastic, advocacy. Cornwallis, who, though loyal to his more sanguine colleague, was pessimistic as to the success of his efforts, reported in the autumn to London that the Unionists had 'sensibly gained strength'. In July and August the Lord Lieutenant made a tour of the counties of Waterford, Tipperary, Cork and Kilkenny. He was cordially received and in all the towns addresses were presented to him in favour of the Union. In October he visited the northern counties, and as a result could report: 'My northern tour has answered my most

## UNION CARRIED

sanguine expectations'. Lord Kenmare and Lord Fin-gall, two prominent Roman Catholic peers, came out strongly in support of the Union; the Roman Catholic Hierarchy took a similar line. Dr. Moylan, Bishop of Cork, wrote in September to Sir J. C. Hippisley: 'The Roman Catholics in general are avowedly for the measure'. In October the Archbishop of Dublin wrote: 'The question of the Union is daily gaining ground'. Undoubtedly it was. But the opponents also were working hard. They collected £100,000 to promote the success of their cause. Petitions poured in from twenty-six counties. Lord Downshire was dismissed from his Lord Lieutenancy and from the command of his militia regiments for soliciting signatures from his regiment for a petition against the Union.

Parliament met again in January 1800 and the Address to the Crown was carried by 138 to 96. Castlereagh was greatly encouraged. On February 5 he explained to the House the terms on which the Union was to be concluded, and his explanation was favourably received. But the parliamentary position was still critical. Grattan returned to the House to lead the opposition, having purchased a seat at Wicklow for £2,400. £5,000 was the market price for a vote in the Commons against the Bill, and at least a dozen Government supporters succumbed to the temptation. Nevertheless, leave to bring in a Bill was given by a majority of 60 (21 May) and after four months of arduous fighting in the House and in Committee the Bill was ultimately carried in the Commons by 153 to 88, and in the Lords by a majority of 69. The Royal Assent was given on August 1st. The Bill passed the British Parliament without difficulty.

Thus was the momentous 'Treaty' concluded. The Parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland were to be united. Ireland was to be represented in the House of Lords by four lords spiritual of Ireland 'by rotation

of sessions', and by twenty-eight lords temporal elected for life by the peers of Ireland, and in the House of Commons by one hundred members, two for each Irish county, two each for the cities of Dublin and Cork, one each for thirty-one other boroughs and for Trinity College. Any Irish peer not elected to the House of Lords was to be eligible for election for a British county or borough. The established Churches of England and Ireland were to be united into one 'Protestant episcopal Church', and the 'continuance and preservation of the said united Church' was to be 'deemed and taken to be an essential and fundamental part of the union'. The Presbyterian Church was also to remain as then established. There was to be complete equality in respect of trade and navigation between the two Kingdoms. Ireland was for twenty years to contribute 'two-fifteenths' to the public expenditure of the United Kingdom, but the national debts of the two Kingdoms were to remain separate. Ireland was to retain its own Great Seal and Privy Council.

That the terms were fair and even generous to Ireland is not disputed. Castlereagh saw to that. As to the means employed to secure the passage of the Bill through the Irish Parliament there is less unanimity. Certain facts are not, however, in dispute. Twenty commoners received Irish peerages, sixteen Irish peers were advanced a step in the peerage of Ireland, four Irish peers became peers of the United Kingdom. £1,260,000 was paid in compensation either to the owners of boroughs, or to ownerless boroughs, deprived entirely of representation in the United Parliament. A relatively small sum, perhaps £10,000, was expended on newspaper propaganda.

Do these facts substantiate the charge that the Union was 'carried by bribery and corruption', as well as by 'fear'? 'The minister', said Sheil, 'was supplied with a

purse of gold for the senator and a rod of iron for the people.' It is admittedly unfortunate that the Union followed so close upon the rebellion. It has consequently been possible to represent it as a penal measure imposed upon a people cowed into submission by the brutal methods employed in the suppression of the rebellion. Even more regrettable was the failure of the British Government to fulfil immediately the expectations of the Irish Catholics, not to say to redeem the pledges given to them by Pitt and Castlereagh. The charge of corruption, though commonly admitted, is another matter. Of the grant of peerages too much has been made. Scores of peerages have before and since been given for less important reasons and in return for services not more valuable. In 1779, Lord North, on a single day and for no special reason, created eighteen new (Irish) peerages and advanced twelve existing peers a step. In less than six years (1916-22) Mr. Lloyd George created nearly a hundred new peers. In view of the magnitude of the legislative achievement the creation and promotion of peers in 1800 was on a modest scale. Nevertheless, the King proved very stiff about the creation of peers, and the Duke of Portland not too compliant. Both Lord Cornwallis and Lord Castlereagh felt their personal credit involved, and threatened to resign if their engagements were not honoured. The British ministers accordingly agreed to put the necessary pressure upon the King, and to implement the promises made by their representatives in Ireland.<sup>1</sup>

The £1,260,000 given in compensation for the extinction of vested rights in boroughs was no more than the market value. Boroughs, alike in England, Scotland, and Ireland were, in the eighteenth century, as much a species of property as benefices in the Church of England. Pitt's motion for parliamentary reform in

<sup>1</sup> C.C., III, 320 ff.

England (1785) was based on the same principle. The English boroughs were, however, a more valuable property than the Irish and the owners of the thirty-six boroughs which he proposed to disfranchise were consequently to receive £27,000 apiece. The Irish borough-owners were bought out at £15,000—£16,000 per borough. In the case of boroughs without owners the same rate was paid and the money was vested in trustees to be expended on objects of public utility. In the latter cases there could, obviously, be no question of bribery or corruption. In the case of personal owners the market rate was paid indifferently to supporters and opponents of the Act of Union. Of the total sum of £1,260,000, £67,500 was paid to four English noblemen who owned boroughs in Ireland—£30,000 to the Duke of Devonshire, £15,000 each to Lord Darnley and Lord Wellesley, and £7,500 to Lord Lyttelton; £60,000 went for various charitable or public utility purposes to the extinguished boroughs which were not owned, and £1,100,000 to Irish owners of boroughs. Of the latter sum nearly half was paid to borough-owners who were opposed to the Union, among the largest beneficiaries being Lord Downshire (£52,000), Lord Granard and Lord Belmore (£30,000 each), and the Duke of Leinster (£28,000). No compensation was paid in respect of any borough which retained any representation in the Imperial Parliament, and it is stated by Dr. Ingram that in not a single case, whether in England or Ireland, did the borough-owner decline to accept the 'tainted' money.<sup>1</sup>

In a careful *Memorandum* submitted in February 1799 to the Duke of Portland, Lord Castlereagh had estimated the amount legitimately due as compensation to 'vested

<sup>1</sup> *The Irish Legislative Union*, p. 188. The expenditure is exhaustively analysed by the same writer, pp. 182 ff. A list of Irish Boroughs is given in *C.C.*, III. 428–36.

## COMPENSATION FOR DISFRANCHISEMENT

interests' about to be extinguished at £1,455,000.<sup>1</sup> But the basis of calculation differed somewhat from that which was ultimately adopted in the case of the borough-owners. What sums, if any, were paid to individual members of Parliament other than 'owners', it is impossible to say, but all the available evidence points to the conclusion that the amount placed by the British Government at the disposal of the Irish Executive was very small and was spent mainly on literary and journalistic propaganda. Even Lord Brougham, though reiterating the persistent charge of general corruption, admits that Lord Castlereagh had 'no direct hand in the bribery practised'.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Dunbar Ingram, whose patient researches put the whole matter, for the first time, in accurate perspective, goes much further. The whole enquiry had, he writes, left on his mind 'a strong conviction that the Union was undertaken from the purest motives; that it was carried by fair and constitutional means; and that its final accomplishment was accompanied by the hearty assent and concurrence of the two peoples that dwelt in Ireland'.<sup>3</sup>

That the Catholics were persuaded to acquiesce at the moment is true; that the Protestants ultimately came, but not for long years, to regard the Union as their sheet anchor is undeniable; that the motives of Cornwallis and Castlereagh not less than those of Pitt were pure, and their hands clean, is certain. The plain truth is that Castlereagh and Cornwallis had no means, even had they had the disposition, for promiscuous bribery. As Lord Cornwallis writes in a confidential letter to his brother, 'The enemy to my certain knowledge offer £5,000 for a vote; if we had the means and were disposed to make such vile use of them we dare not trust the credit of Government in the hands of such rascals.'

<sup>1</sup> *C.C.*, II. 150 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical Sketches*, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Ingram, pp. vi, vii.

Far more serious, alike in its moral aspects and in its political consequences, was the disappointment suffered by the Irish Catholics. Neither the British Government nor Lord Cornwallis nor Lord Castlereagh had given any specific pledge in the matter. Catholic Emancipation (though included in Castlereagh's first draft) was not mentioned in the Treaty, but it is certain that the Irish Catholics would not have acquiesced in the Union, still less supported it, had they not been assured that it would be followed by Emancipation.

Directly the Union became law, Cornwallis and Castlereagh earnestly pressed upon Pitt and Portland the immediate satisfaction of Catholic claims. But difficulties arose; Cornwallis became alarmed and on October 8 1800, wrote to General Ross, his former aide-de-camp and most intimate friend, as follows: 'I cannot help entertaining considerable apprehensions that our Cabinet will not have the firmness to adopt such measures as will render the Union an efficient advantage to the Empire. Those things which, if now liberally granted, might make the Irish a loyal people, will be of little avail when they are extorted on a future day. I do not however despair.' The relations of Great Britain and Ireland from 1800 to 1829, if not to 1922, provide a striking commentary on the penultimate sentence. The prediction was unhappily fulfilled to the letter. Castlereagh promptly (September) prepared and transmitted to Pitt an exceedingly able and exhaustive memorandum on the Catholic claims,<sup>1</sup> and followed it up by a second memorandum on the Tithe Question, and a third on concurrent endowment for both the Catholic and the Dissenting clergy. Tithe paid in kind by Catholic parishioners to Protestant incumbents, though a trifling impost, was a perpetual source of irritation. Castlereagh proposed an imme-

<sup>1</sup> C.C., IV. 394-400 ff.

diate assessment of 1s. per acre on all improved arable, pasture, meadow and woodlands which would, he estimated, yield £50,000 a year for the Church and get rid of the grievances of the peasants. As for concurrent endowment he drafted a scheme by which at a cost of £212,000 a year to the State an endowment would be provided ranging from £750 a year to the Archbishop down to £25 for the humblest of the parish priests. Whether the Catholic Church would have surrendered even a fraction of their independence in return for a State subsidy may be doubted. But the idea was eminently statesmanlike, and if the scheme had formed part of a large measure of Catholic Relief it might have averted many of the difficulties ahead of both parts of the now United Kingdom. In December Castlereagh went over to London, and laid the whole case before the Prime Minister and the Duke of Portland, and urgently advised immediate action.

The results of his intervention are summarized in a letter which he addressed to Mr. Pitt on 1 January 1801. He recalled to Pitt's remembrance the whole course of the negotiations; the opinion of the Irish Government that the union 'could not be carried if the Catholics were embarked in an active opposition to it, and that their resistance would be unanimous and zealous if they had reason to suppose that the sentiments of ministers would remain unchanged in respect to their exclusion'; that Lord Cornwallis and he understood that, though some serious difficulties had to be surmounted, 'the opinion of the Cabinet was favourable to the principle of the measure' and that consequently the Irish Executive was fully warranted in soliciting every support the Catholics could afford, that in fact they omitted no exertion to call forth the Catholics in favour of the union' and that in addition to the regret which the disappointment of Catholic hopes would



cause, on public grounds, to Lord Cornwallis, he would feel 'a peculiar degree of pain in finding himself in so awkward a situation'.<sup>1</sup>

Pitt's views entirely coincided with those of his agents in Ireland. He never intended that the Union should stand alone. Even Lord Macaulay himself (in 1844) admitted this. 'We shall', he said, 'do great injustice both to his head and his heart if we forget that he was permitted to carry into effect only some unconnected portions of a comprehensive and well concerted scheme. He wished to blend not only the Parliaments, but the nations and to make the two islands one in interest and affection.'<sup>2</sup>

But Pitt encountered an insurmountable obstacle in the scruples of his Sovereign. That the King had just cause to complain that he had not been consulted in the matter and was consequently taken completely by surprise must be admitted. About this the King wrote (7 February 1801), 'I never had the smallest suspicion till within these very few weeks.'<sup>3</sup> Pitt and Portland were in this matter greatly to blame. How bitterly and how justly would Queen Victoria have reproached Mr. Gladstone had she in 1868 been kept as much in the dark about Irish Disestablishment as was George III about the satisfaction of the Catholic claims.

Castlereagh and Pitt had, indeed, more in mind than the admission of Catholics to Parliament and public offices. They were prepared with schemes for the settlement of the thorny question of Tithes, and for the State endowment of the Catholic clergy and Dissenting ministers. 'Who will say', as Lord Rosebery perti-

<sup>1</sup> C.C., IV, 8-12.

<sup>2</sup> P.D., LXXII, 1175 (subsequently corrected as above) and cf. Macaulay's remarkable tribute to the statesmanship of Pitt *ap. Biographies*, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Cornwallis Corresp., III. 333.

nently asks, 'that followed up by spontaneous and simultaneous concessions of this kind the policy of the Union might not have been a success'.<sup>1</sup>

To Pitt only one honourable course was, under the circumstances, open. On February 5 1801, he resigned. Cornwallis and Castlereagh immediately followed his example, though they consented to carry on until their respective successors, Lord Hardwicke and W. C. Abbott (afterwards Lord Colchester), could relieve them (17 May).

Castlereagh took his place in the first session of the United Parliament as member for Co. Down (January 1801). He was re-elected unopposed in 1802, but on acceptance of the Colonial Office in 1805 was defeated by Col. Meade, who had the Downshire interest behind him. He was elected for Boroughbridge at a by-election in January 1806, but at the General Election in the same year transferred his services to Plympton, a pocket borough placed at his disposal by Lord Mount Edgcumbe, whose wife was half-sister to Lady Castlereagh. He continued to sit for Plympton until 1812 when he won back his old seat in Co. Down, and held it until 1821. His succession to his father's Irish peerage in 1821 rendered him ineligible for an Irish constituency, and Orford again provided him with a seat for the brief remainder of his life.

As a member of the United Parliament Castlereagh was thrown into even closer association with Mr. Pitt, for whose genius and character he had an unbounded admiration and whose views, on all public questions, he shared. That did not, however, prevent him from accepting from Addington the Presidency of the Board of Control in 1802. In that capacity he entered the Cabinet at the age of thirty-three.

From the first he took his full share in the general

<sup>1</sup> *Pitt*, p. 198.

administration of affairs; and, despite the fact that his ministerial connection with Ireland was ended, he never ceased to take the closest interest in its fortunes. In particular was he concerned about the defenceless condition of that island and the probability that France would renew the attempt to invade it.

His apprehensions were well grounded. In July 1803 an insurrection broke out under Robert Emmet. Its avowed object was the separation of Ireland from England. The insurrection was easily suppressed; Emmett and one or two associates were executed: but Ireland was governed by martial law until 1805, an Arms Act was passed in 1807; the Habeas Corpus Act was repeatedly suspended, and of the 'ordinary law' Ireland had little experience in the years immediately succeeding the Act of Union.

Meanwhile, the Catholic question was not allowed to rest in the United Parliament. Motions in favour of Emancipation were, between 1805 and 1812, periodically made in the House of Lords by Lord Donoughmore, Lord Grenville and Lord Wellesley, and in the Commons by Grattan, Plunket and Canning—only to be in both Houses rejected. But in 1812 Canning induced the House of Commons to pledge itself to an early consideration of the question; in 1813 Grattan, with Castlereagh's help, carried the second reading of an Emancipation Bill, which was wrecked mainly by the opposition of Sir Robert Peel. From that time onwards, however, the question, owing chiefly to Castlereagh's persistent advocacy, was officially regarded as an open one in the Liverpool Cabinet.

But the battle was eventually won not at Westminster but in Ireland. In 1823 O'Connell founded the Catholic Association; in 1828 he defeated a popular member of the Government, Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, in Co. Clare; and Catholic though he was claimed to take his seat at

#### CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION

Westminster. The battle was won; and in a way characteristically English. To refuse to Catholics the abstract right of citizenship was one thing; it was another to refuse to allow a duly elected Catholic to take his seat. In 1829 Emancipation was proposed and carried by Wellington and Peel. Every possible slight was, however, inflicted on the man who had 'converted Peel and conquered Wellington'. Conceded in this grudging spirit, and carried with irritating concomitants, a healing measure may well fail to heal. If Castlereagh could have had his way, had graceful and generous concessions been made in 1801, Emancipation might have served to consolidate the Union: wrested from a reluctant England in 1829 it was destined to inaugurate the agitation for repeal.

## CHAPTER VII

### AT THE INDIA OFFICE—CASTLEREAGH AND WELLESLEY

CASTLEREAGH was not allowed to remain long without official employment. In July 1802 he joined, with Pitt's entire approval, the Addington Ministry as President of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India. In October he was admitted, to his own satisfaction, and to the great advantage of the State, to the Cabinet. 'It is Mr. A.'s [Addington's] intention on Wednesday to propose my being of the Cabinet to the King, which I am principally desirous of, from the present complexion of our politics, it being always satisfactory in critical times to participate in Councils, to the support of which you are associated. What will be the issue of the present discussions it is difficult to say, but I think the chances preponderate of a renewal of hostilities [with France] at no distant period.'<sup>1</sup> So Castlereagh wrote to Cornwallis on 19th October 1802. His new office was the creation of Pitt's *India Act* of 1784.<sup>2</sup> Avowedly a compromise the Act established a system which was not intended to be more than temporary. In fact it endured as long as the East India Company itself—until, under the *Act* of 1858 the government of British India was transferred from the Company to the Crown.

Pitt's *Act* left the Directors of the East India Company

<sup>1</sup> India Office Home Series Misc. 804, pp. 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> 24 Geo. III, Sess. 2, c. 25. Cf. also the *Charter Act* of 1793 (33 Geo. III, c. 52).

## THE BOARD OF CONTROL

still nominally in control of the Empire which their servants had established. But the government in reality passed into the hands of a Board of six Privy Councillors one of whom was the Chancellor of the Exchequer and a second was one of the Secretaries of State. The members of the Board were, until 1793, unpaid and were excluded from the exercise of patronage which remained exclusively in the hands of the Directors. The Board was, however, to have access to all papers and muniments of the Company and was 'to superintend, direct and control all acts, operations and concerns which in any way relate to the civil or military government or revenues of the British territorial possessions in the East Indies.' All despatches and instructions were sent to India in the name of the Directors, but the Board was entitled to have copies of all despatches sent or received, and as a fact became more and more responsible for the policy enjoined upon the servants of the Company in India.

Lord Sydney, as Secretary of State, formally presided over the first Board but he was not in sympathy with Pitt's policy and in 1790 was succeeded by William (afterwards Baron) Grenville. By 1786, however, Henry Dundas (afterwards Viscount Melville), though not yet a member of the Cabinet, had become the effective member of the Board; in 1793 he was formally appointed President and received (like the other members of the Board) a salary paid by the Company. Not, indeed, until the India Act of 1919 was the salary of the Secretary of State placed on the British Estimates and consequently made subject to a vote of the House of Commons.

Dundas remained at the India Office during the first half of Lord Wellesley's administration, but in 1801 he gave place to Lord Lewisham, a political nonentity who was succeeded (1802) by Lord Castlereagh. Dundas

## CASTLEREAGH

was greatly pleased by Castlereagh's acceptance of the office and wrote to Lord Wellesley (21 September 1802): 'We are in the habit of constant correspondence and my mind is again at ease with regard to the administration of Indian affairs having no doubt that the principles on which I acted are fully felt and will be invariably acted upon by him [Castlereagh].' Before entering on his duties Castlereagh spent a week at Dunira with Dundas, and from Dunira his first official letter to Lord Wellesley was dated August 10 1802. The relations between Castlereagh and his predecessor remained continuously cordial throughout his term of office, and in 1804 Dundas joined with Castlereagh and Pitt in an urgent request to Lord Cornwallis to resume office as Governor-General.

Between the Directors in Leadenhall Street and the Governor-General in Calcutta—especially when the Governor-General was a man of the masterful and autocratic temper of Lord Wellesley—the Presidency of the Board of Control was no bed of roses. Fortunately, Lord Castlereagh was temperamentally a peace-maker; Lord Wellesley was his compatriot and friend. Even so, as the sequel will demonstrate, his task was not easy. His acceptance of the India Office was, however, in complete accord with the dominant principle of his public career. Castlereagh was, in the best sense of the word, a genuine imperialist. He envisaged all the problems of statesmanship against the background of world-politics; his primary concern was the security and dignity of the British Empire as a whole. From his first entrance into the Irish Parliament his speeches made it plain that, Irish patriot as he was, it was of Ireland as a unit in the Empire that he was constantly thinking. When commercial questions were under consideration he refused to think only of their effect upon Ireland. What solution would most effectually

contribute to the security and prosperity of the Empire—that was the criterion he applied. The Irish rebellion must at all costs be suppressed, the French expeditions to Ireland be frustrated, not merely in the interests of Ireland, but in those of the Empire. Through the same spectacles he looked at the proceedings in the Parliament on College Green. So regarding them he became gradually convinced that the Grattan Constitution threatened the security of the Empire. Only a union of the two legislatures could, in his judgement, avert the danger.

With a mind dominated by the same idea Castlereagh went, in 1802, to the India Office. There was, indeed, everything to stimulate his imperialist imagination. Despite the expulsion of the French from Egypt, despite the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens (1802) Napoleon's mind was still bent upon the achievement of his original purpose. Long before England had ever given a thought to Egypt, Buonaparte had fixed on it as the vital spot at which he must strike. 'Really to ruin England we must make ourselves masters of Egypt.' So General Buonaparte had written to the Directory before the Treaty of Campo Formio was signed (1797). The Ionian isles acquired by France, under that Treaty, were but stepping-stones to Egypt. Egypt should be a stage on the road to India. Talleyrand was employed to represent Buonaparte's large views to the lawyers who at the moment controlled the situation in Paris: 'Our war with England offers the most favourable opportunity for the invasion of Egypt. . . . This also offers us a chance of driving the English out of India by sending thither 15,000 troops from Cairo via Suez.'

Not until the 'Spanish ulcer' had begun to drain his strength did Buonaparte abandon that ambition. When, in November 1797, he was gazetted to the command of the 'Army of England', he accepted it not without



an *arrière-pensée*. 'This little Europe'—such was the burden of his talk with intimates—'offers too contracted a field. One must go to the East to gain power and win greatness. Europe is a mere mole-hill; it is only in the East, where there are 600,000,000 of human beings that there have ever been vast empires and mighty revolutions. I am willing to inspect the northern coast to see what can be done. But if, as I fear, the success of a landing in England should appear doubtful, I shall make my Army of England the Army of the East and go to Egypt.'

That is precisely what he did: he kept his objective steadily in view; nor did he conceal it from his troops. 'Remember', he said as they embarked for Egypt at Toulon, 'You are a wing of the Army of England.'<sup>1</sup>

From Cairo Buonaparte wrote to Tippu: 'You have already been informed of my arrival on the Red Sea, with an innumerable and invincible army, full of the desire of delivering you from the iron yoke of England.' And this, as Mr. Roberts shrewdly surmises was only one of many communications of like content.<sup>2</sup> Buonaparte's scheme miscarried. His army, it is true, was wellnigh invincible; but so was the British Navy, and so long as Great Britain remained mistress of the sea, Buonaparte could send no effective assistance to Tippu, or any other Indian potentate.

The idea was not, however, abandoned. It was the basis of Buonaparte's alliance with the Czar Paul I of Russia (1801). France and Russia agreed to co-operate in an attack on India. A large force of Cossacks and Russian regulars were to march by way of Turkestan, Khiva and Bokhara to the Upper Indus valley while 35,000 French troops under Masséna were to descend

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for further details of this matter, Marriott: *Eastern Question*, c. vii.

<sup>2</sup> *Wellesley*, p. 51.

the Danube, and going by way of the Black Sea and the Caspian make an attack on Persia, take Herat and Kandahar, and then join the Russians on the Indus. The details of the scheme were worked out to an hour and a man: twenty days were to suffice for reaching the Black Sea; fifty-five more were to see the French in Persia and another forty-five in India. At the end of June 1801 the joint attack upon India would be delivered. Towards the end of February, a large force did actually cross the Volga. The assassination of the Czar Paul in March put an end, for the moment, to this fantastic project, but after the conclusion of the Treaty of Tilsit it was revived, though less seriously, between the Emperor Napoleon and the Czar Alexander.

In the meantime, the whole position in India had been revolutionized by the vigorous policy of Lord Wellesley.

In December 1799 Wellesley had despatched John Malcolm on a mission to the Shah of Persia at Teheran. Two treaties were negotiated: a commercial treaty provided for unrestricted commerce between Persia and the Company, and the cession to the latter of certain islands in the Persian Gulf; the political treaty bound the parties to common action against Zeman Shah, and the French. The Shah undertook to exclude the French altogether from his dominions, and to extirpate them if they attempted to settle there. The treaties were never formally executed, but they none the less testify to Wellesley's alertness of mind, his width of vision, and his sleepless vigilance in safeguarding against any possible danger the Dependency committed to his care.

In 1801 Wellesley would have anticipated the action too tardily taken in 1810 and sent an expedition, under the command of his brother Arthur, against the isles of France and Bourbon—those prolific sources of

intrigue in peace, and of piracy and buccaneering in war.' But Commodore Rainier, who commanded the British Squadron, refused to co-operate, disdaining, it would seem, to receive orders from a servant of the East India Company. The project was consequently abandoned, only to be resumed and carried to a successful issue by Lord Minto in 1810. In the meantime the losses inflicted by French privateers and cruisers upon Calcutta merchants were estimated at between £3,000,000 and £4,000,000: many magnificent Indiamen were captured by French frigates, and French cruisers swept the seas from Madagascar to Java, without an effort at reprisals by the British squadron in Indian waters. It was a sorry spectacle: but Lord Wellesley was the last man responsible for providing it. On the contrary, in 1801 he despatched Sir David Baird with an Indian contingent to the Red Sea. It landed at Kosseir, marched across the desert to Thebes, and reached Cairo in August only to learn that the French had just agreed to evacuate Egypt. But the expedition was the first of many intimations to the enemies of England that her military resources were not limited by Europe.

Lord Wellesley then, no less than Lord Castlereagh, envisaged the problem that confronted the British Empire in India against an extended background, and in particular as affected by the grandiose ambitions of Napoleon. The President and the Governor-General were in general agreement about policy but Castlereagh's position was complicated by the fact that Whitehall was much nearer to Leadenhall Street than were either to Calcutta. Much of Castlereagh's time was consequently spent in the attempt to mediate between a Governor-General, somewhat overbearing and autocratic, and a Court of Directors, perhaps overcautious, opposed, as was Parliament, to any extension of terri-

torial responsibilities, and resentful of Wellesley's contemptuous disregard both of their instructions and the will of Parliament.

The Act of 1784 had specifically declared 'That the pursuit of schemes of conquest was repugnant to the wish, to the honour and policy of the British nation, and it was therefore enacted that it should not be lawful for the Governor-General, without the express authority and concord of his Court of Directors or of the Secret Committee, either to declare or commence hostilities, or to enter into any treaty for making war against any of the native Princes or States in India. . . .'

. It is only in accord with the irony of political fate that the enactment of Pitt's Bill and the transference of the Government of India from a commercial company to a Parliamentary Board should have marked the real beginning of territorial expansion in India.

To the character, the abilities and the conduct, in critical times, of the President of the Board, Lord Wellesley himself bore generous testimony. Writing in 1839 to the 3rd Marquess of Londonderry he said:

'The whole course of my public service, so far as it was connected with the public acts of that most excellent and able personage [Castlereagh] affords one connected series of proofs of his eminent ability, spotless integrity, high sense of honour, comprehensive and enlarged views, sound practical knowledge, ready, despatch of business, and perfect discretion and temper in the conduct of the most arduous public affairs.

'He came to the chief conduct of the affairs of India at a most critical period. . . . Although he differed with me in some points connected with origin of the [Maratha] war, he most zealously and honourably assisted me in the conduct of it, and gave me his powerful support in Parliament against all the assaults of my enemies. He at once saw the great objects of policy which I contem-

plated and which have since been so happily accomplished. . . . In my published despatches your Lordship will find abundant proofs of your brother's merits of every description. . . . But I must add one circumstance which does not appear in those despatches. During the whole of my administration he never interfered in the slightest degree in the vast patronage of our Indian Empire, and he took especial care to signify this determination to the expectants by whom he was surrounded, and to me.'

'The great objects of policy which I contemplated.' Whatever may be said in detail in criticism of Lord Wellesley's methods in India it cannot be denied that the objects of his policy were great. Only in so far as they required the assent and commanded the support of Lord Castlereagh is reference to them permissible in this narrative. But Wellesley never forgot that while his immediate task was to guard an outpost of the Empire, the heart of the Empire was also in great peril.

At the moment (1797) when Lord Wellesley accepted the Governor-Generalship of India Great Britain was sustaining single-handed the struggle against France. The first Coalition had been shattered: Prussia had concluded peace at Basle (1795); Austria, defeated in North Italy by General Buonaparte, signed the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797. But it was not of Prussia or Austria that the young Corsican adventurer was thinking. From the outset to the close of his career he knew only one real enemy. Against that enemy he could now concentrate all his activities; but for the moment he proposed, paradoxically as it may seem, to attack England by way of Egypt. Egypt, as clearly indicated, was, however, only a stepping-stone to India.

<sup>1</sup> C.C., I. 100.

## TIPPU AND FRANCE

Lord Wellesley landed at Madras on April 26 1798. On the very same day a small body of Frenchmen and half-castes despatched from Mauritius landed at Mangalore, the western port of Mysore.

For thirty years the Mahomedan adventurers who had made themselves masters of the great Hindu state of Mysore had been thorns in the side of the English Company. With Sultan Hyder Ali and his son Tippu three wars (1767-92) had already been fought. The third war conducted by Lord Cornwallis had resulted in the defeat of Tippu who agreed, as a condition of peace, to pay a large indemnity and to cede half his great dominions which, for politic reasons, were divided between the English Company, the Maratha Confederacy and the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Tippu was a statesman of real ability and, chafing under these conditions, determined to turn the world-situation to his own advantage. At Seringapatam, as at other Indian capitals, there were a number of French adventurers eager to persuade Indian rulers to turn their arms against the intrusive Englishmen who had expelled the French from India. Tippu was easily persuaded to permit one of these Frenchmen, 'Citizen Ripaud', a worthless adventurer who represented himself as an envoy from Mauritius, to hoist the flag of the French Republic and plant a tree of Liberty. Towards the end of 1797 Tippu dispatched 'Citizen Ripaud' to Mauritius to propose an alliance between himself and the French Republic for the expulsion of the English from India. 'Happy moment!' wrote Tippu. 'The time is come when I can deposit in the bosom of my friends the hatred which I bear against these oppressors of the human race.' Once the English were expelled, Bombay should be handed over to France.

The French Governor of the Mauritius eagerly accepted Tippu's advances, and proclaimed to the world

that the Sultan was waiting only for French assistance 'to declare war on the English, whom he ardently desires to expel from India'.

If historians can afford to treat such proclamations as burlesque, Wellesley, bearing the burden of responsibility, could not. Had he treated the situation as farcical, it might easily have turned to tragedy.

He took his measures promptly. The strategic position of the English Company was, in 1798, not a strong one. The possessions of the Company consisted of three blocks of territory, mutually isolated—Bengal and Bihar with part of Orissa; various tracts of territory attached to the Presidency town of Madras; and on the western coast the two islands of Bombay and Salsette. Between the three Presidencies the only means of communication, without passing through foreign territory, was by sea.

Apart from Mysore two great 'native' Powers might well have challenged the supremacy of the English Company. One was the Nizam of Hyderabad, the overlord of the Deccan; the other was the great Hindu Confederacy of the Marathas. Hyderabad, it has been truly said, 'forms the very core of the Deccan'. Ever since 1758 the Nizam, its ruler, had, save for a brief period in 1780, been the faithful ally of the English Company. But the British had failed to succour him when he was attacked by the Marathas in 1795 and in disgust he invited the French to take over the training and command of his troops. When Wellesley reached India he found these Frenchmen, 'men', in his own words, 'of the most virulent principles of Jacobinism', in command of a highly disciplined army of 14,000 men. The Nizam was, however, persuaded by Lord Wellesley to enter into a defensive alliance against Tippu. He agreed to disband his 'French' army, to receive instead six battalions commanded by British

officers, and to find nearly £250,000 a year for their maintenance. After the defeat and surrender of Tippu the Nizam was rewarded with a substantial share of his territory, but he never effectually established his authority over it and eventually surrendered it to the Company in lieu of the subsidies which under Treaty he had engaged to pay to the Company. Hyderabad thus became in fact as in name a protected state.

Of possible rivals for supremacy in India undoubtedly the most formidable when Lord Wellesley reached India were the Marathas—the great Confederacy of Hindu Princes who dominated Central India. Of these Princes the most powerful was Daulat Rao Sindia, who, like Tippu, depended largely for the maintenance of his supremacy upon an army trained and officered by Frenchmen. So predominant indeed was French influence in North-West India that Wellesley could without exaggeration write of ‘the French State erected by Mr. Perron on the Jumna’.

Wellesley’s policy towards the Marathas was summarized and embodied in the Treaty of Bassein concluded with the Peshwa of Poonah on December 31 1802. Under that Treaty the Company undertook to furnish, and the Peshwa agreed to receive in his territory, a permanent subsidiary force of not less than 6,000 regular native infantry with the usual proportion of European artillery and guns, and appropriate equipment of stores and munitions. The Peshwa was to assign to the Company certain scheduled districts<sup>1</sup> yielding 26 lacs for the maintenance of the forces; to retain no Europeans in his service, and to engage not to enter into any treaties or negotiations with ‘any other power whatever’ without the consent of the Company, who, apart from this wise provision, repudiated all right of

<sup>1</sup> Text in Aitchison: *Treaties and Lands*, VI. 52, as abbreviated in Muir, *The Making of British India*, pp. 239-40.



interference with the absolute sovereignty of the Peshwa in his own dominions.

The significance of this treaty is clearly demonstrated by the apprehensions it excited both in Whitehall and Leadenhall Street. In addition to the official dispatch which he sent to the Governor-General through the Secret Committee, Lord Castlereagh wrote privately to Lord Wellesley (4 March 1804) enclosing an elaborate memorandum on the policy of the Company in regard to the Marathas.

The professed end of that policy he assumed to be '*a defensive alliance and guarantee* connecting the Mahrattas with the Nizam and the Company, and through that league, *preserving the peace of India*' (the italics are his). The apprehension of 'danger from French influence, acting through the Mahrattas' he dismissed as too remote for serious consideration. The policy of the Company towards the Marathas must be considered in the light of the fresh situation created by the reduction of the power of Tippu, the intimate connection established with the Nizam, and the consolidation of the Company's authority in the Carnatic, in Tanjore, and in Oude. Recent events appeared to Lord Castlereagh to place 'the Mahratta question entirely on new grounds'. 'The Mahrattas have never in any instance commenced hostilities against us' and 'there seems no special ground to apprehend future danger from [them]'. But of what use is it to offer a 'guarantee for preserving the peace of Hindustan' to people when 'the genius of their government is . . . predatory and warlike'? One or other of the Maratha chiefs might be willing to accept our help against his rival, but a British force established permanently in the dominions not one of them would voluntarily accept. The activities of French officers in Sindia's army need, of course, to be carefully watched, but, for the rest, our true policy surely is to allow the

Maratha chieftains to fight each other. Before the defeat of Tippu this policy would have been too risky; but the position is now entirely changed—a truth which the Treaty of Bassein appears to ignore. Surely in the case of a power like that of Marathas—so different from that of Tippu or the Nizam, it would have been better to establish a subsidiary force ‘at certain positions within our own territories’ and not to send it into a Maratha state—whether that of the Peshwa or Sindia—save ‘*upon requisition*’.

The whole argument of Lord Castlereagh’s closely reasoned and exhaustive memorandum reveals his apprehensions lest we should involve ourselves ‘too much in the endless and complicated distractions of that turbulent [Maratha] Empire’. ‘The object to be aimed at’, he insisted, ‘should be to place the alliance with the Court of Poonah as nearly as may be on the footing of our connexion with the Nizam, previous to 1798, retaining, however, the assigned lands as a permanent provision for a permanent force to be held always disposable for the protection of the Peshwa, although not stationed within his dominion.’<sup>1</sup> Whatever opinion may be held as to the validity of Castlereagh’s argument the memorandum in which it is elaborated affords striking testimony to the closeness with which he had studied the problems arising in India, and to the firmness of his grip upon the outstanding facts of the situation.

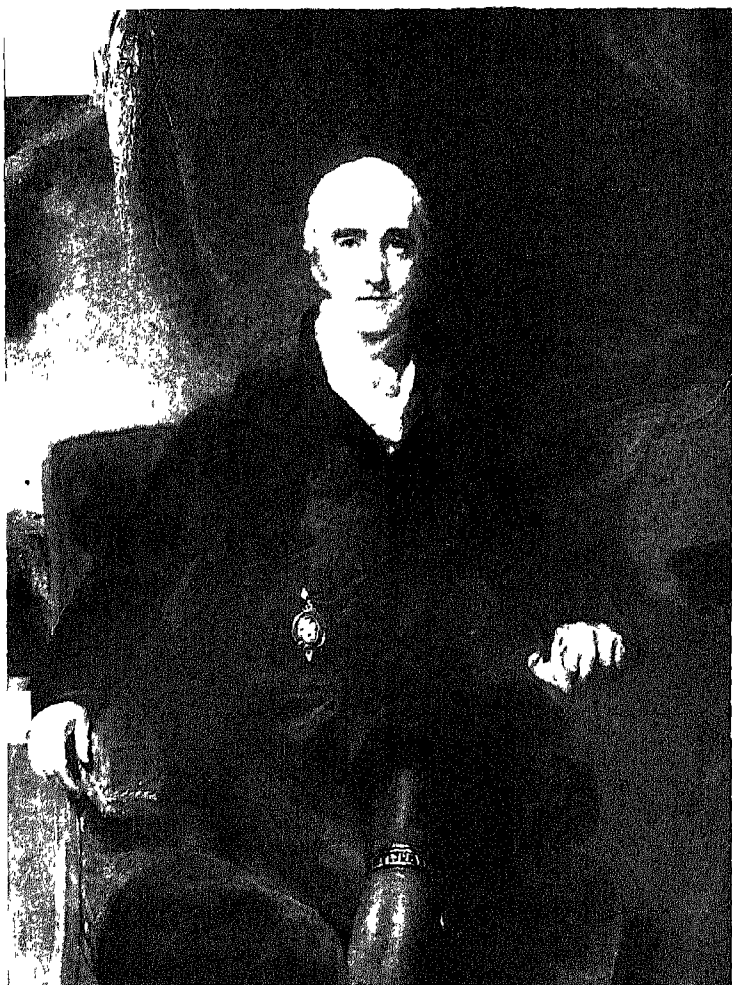
The Governor-General sent Lord Castlereagh’s ‘observations’ to different persons in India, and invited their opinions thereon. In order that these opinions might be given more freely the name of the writer was suppressed. The official answer to Lord Castlereagh’s Memorandum was from the pen of Major-General Arthur Wellesley, and the Governor-General, pre-

<sup>1</sup> *Wellesley Despatches*, V. 302-18.

sumably from its place in the Wellesley Despatches, adopted as his own his brother's reply.

General Wellesley traced in some detail the whole sequence of events from the Treaty of Seringapatam (1792) down to the Treaty of Bassein, but insisted that the dominant fact was that 'the French have never ceased to look to the re-establishment of their power in India' that 'whether at peace or war with Great Britain the object of every French statesman must be to diminish the influence, the power and the prosperity of the British Government in India'. General Wellesley then proceeded to examine in detail the arguments advanced by the 'anonymous Observer'. In particular he treated with scorn the suggestion that the British forces, instead of being stationed within the dominions of the protected Prince, should remain 'upon the frontier' in an attitude of observation and 'have delayed to take any steps till the moment when they or their allies should be attacked. I cannot', comments the General, 'exactly discern the object in assembling the army upon the frontier, if it was to do nothing. The most expensive article in India is an army in the field; and the most useless is one destined to act upon the defensive.' His conclusion was that the 'Treaty of Bassein and the measures adopted in consequence of it, not only afforded the best prospect of preserving the peace of India, but that to have adopted any other measures would have rendered war with Holkar nearly certain, and war with the whole Mahratta nation more probable than it could be under any other course of events'. We cannot, he insisted, ignore the truth that 'the great object of every Mahratta statesman has been to combine their forces to attack the British Government, and if they had ever been free from disputes among themselves they would have carried that plan into execution'.<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of

<sup>1</sup> *Wellesley Despatches*, V. 318-37.



RICHARD COLLEY, 1<sup>ST</sup> MARQUESS WELLESLEY, K.G.

*From the Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence at Windsor Castle*

*(Reproduced by gracious permission of His Majesty the King)*



Bassein he described as a 'wise, just and politic measure'. Nor was General Wellesley singular in holding that view. The opinion of British administrators in India was, indeed, almost unanimously opposed to that of Lord Castlereagh and the authorities at home.

Yet Castlereagh's judgement proved to be right. The Treaty of Bassein did not secure the lasting tranquillity anticipated by the brothers Wellesley. On the contrary, fierce fighting ensued which brought great fame to Sir Arthur Wellesley and to General Lake. But it was not until 1818 that the power of the Mahrattas was finally broken. Thus did Lord Moira complete the task initiated by Lord Wellesley: the British Company became indisputably the paramount power in India.

Lord Wellesley himself had, however, been recalled in 1805. By that time the Directors in Leadenhall Street had finally lost patience with the 'indiscretions' of the brilliant but headstrong and impetuous pro-Consul who represented them in India. Parliament had denounced 'schemes of conquest as repugnant to the wish, to the honour and policy of the British nation'. The Directors had again and again enjoined upon their servants the necessity of retrenchment and economy.

Neither the deliberate policy of Parliament nor the repeated injunctions of the Directors did Wellesley heed. His conquests and annexations transformed the map of India; the Indian debt was increased from seventeen to thirty-one millions, and most of the Princes who retained their territories were drawn into the net of Lord Wellesley's 'subsidiary system', and exercised henceforward a precarious sovereignty as vassals of the English Company. Having regard to his own position, to the resources at his disposal, and to political conditions in the world at large, Lord Wellesley's achievement must be regarded as one of the most remarkable in modern history.

But it is more remarkable in historical retrospect than it was acceptable to the authorities in Leadenhall Street. Nor was it only his 'foreign' policy that brought the great pro-Consul into conflict with his masters.

One of many causes of friction arose in connection with Wellesley's project for a college at Fort William. The British administration in India demanded, in his judgement, an adequately trained Civil Service. Accordingly he set up at Fort William a college in which the training of the lads sent out to India at sixteen to eighteen years of age could be continued. To fit them for duties of rapidly increasing responsibility it was essential to give them more insight than they brought with them from English schools, into the history, language and customs of India.<sup>1</sup>

The Directors denied the necessity for the college, grudged the expenditure involved, censured Lord Wellesley's precipitancy, and ordered the college to be closed.<sup>2</sup> Writing to Lord Melville [Dundas] (4 August 1803) on this subject Castlereagh expressed his anxiety to 'expose the Court as little as possible to the appearance of having decided unwisely on a former occasion, or of being now led into any concession inconsistent with their former opinions'. But he added: 'I soon perceived the question of the College was forgot in their indisposition towards Lord Wellesley. This was distinctly marked in the first Representation which is certainly written in a tone of very unbecoming disrespect to his Lordship.' Nevertheless, Castlereagh persisted in his conciliatory attempt to keep the question, if possible, upon public rather than personal grounds, 'though he thought it material for the Board to state without reserve the extent of authority which they conceived

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 488, 19-142 (18 Aug. 1800), 145-64 (10 April 1801).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 488, 181-96 (27 Jan. 1802).

## THE BOARD AND THE COURT

themselves entitled to exercise'. The attitude of the Court throughout the whole dispute seemed to Castlereagh to make it necessary for him to 'resist a principle which by excluding the Board of Control (that is, the State) from all effectual direction in matters of government would soon encourage and prepare the Court for more extensive attempts at undue authority in the administration of affairs both at home and abroad.'<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Lord Wellesley vehemently protested against the decision of the Directors 'on this painful and most afflicting occasion', and delayed compliance with their orders. Castlereagh also urged that, pending the production of an amended scheme, drastic action should be at least postponed, and drafted a less minatory despatch to that effect. The Court, while disclaiming any prejudice against the Governor-General, declined to adopt Castlereagh's draft. The Board persisted. The Court retorted with a draft designed to convey a severe censure on Lord Wellesley, and invoked the Statute under which they acted. To Lord Wellesley's reiterated arguments in favour of his College the Court replied by an order for the re-establishment of 'Mr. Gilchrist's Seminary' and for the abolition of Lord Wellesley's College—the order to take effect on December 31 1803.<sup>2</sup>

The difficulties inherent in the Acts of 1784 and 1793 were at last clearly exposed. The Board and the Court were in open conflict. The Board repudiated the interpretation put upon the Statutes by the Court, and sharply distinguished 'between the power of deciding what is necessary to be done and that of determining by whom

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 504, 36-41, and cf. I.O., H.S.M. 487, 431-7.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 488, 375. The whole volume is devoted to the subject of the College and of the Hertford (Haileybury) College and is of extraordinary interest and importance as throwing light upon the relations of Whitehall, Leadenhall Street and Calcutta.



it shall be done; the former of which the Legislature has undoubtedly meant to leave ultimately and absolutely with the Board subject to the control of Parliament, as it studiously provided that their authority shall not extend to the latter'. The Board declined to sanction the dispatch of the draft submitted by the Court, and reiterated their orders that the College should, pending a final decision, remain open. Lord Wellesley had not, in fact, closed it.<sup>1</sup>

At home both the disputants took legal opinion. The case for the Court was submitted to three eminent lawyers, Sir James Mansfield (who in 1804 became Chief Justice of the Common Pleas), William Adam, and Samuel Romilly. Their opinion was that the Board of Control 'has no power to order the revival of the College and that the Court of Directors is not bound to send out the dispatch which the Board has [amended and] transmitted to them, and that . . . the Board of Control has no power to create new offices with salaries annexed to them, even if the offices are unquestionably such as relate to the Civil Government of India'.<sup>2</sup>

The Law Officers (Spencer Percevall (*sic*) and Thomas Manners Sutton) advised, on the contrary, that the Board of Control had not 'in the tenor of the said dispatch', exceeded their legal power, but they agreed with the opinion of the lawyers consulted by the Court that the King in Council had no jurisdiction to compel the Directors to send out the dispatch and that the only remedy open to the Board was by an application to the Court of King's Bench for a *Mandamus*, or some other legal process.<sup>3</sup> Sir James Mansfield and his colleagues respectfully reaffirmed their opinion (26 November 1803); the Law Officers (22 February 1804) adhered to their opinion that 'the general power of direction is

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 487, 533-8.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 488, 385-90.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 391-5.

## TRAINING OF CIVILIANS

given to the Board of Control in concerns of Civil Government subject to particular restrictions with respect to the creation of new establishments' and concluded that the order in question was within their general powers. The general question was, then, decided in favour of the Court, but the latter, having vindicated their authority, made a graceful concession on the point immediately at issue, and sent out to India orders in compliance with the wishes of the Board.<sup>1</sup> This concession was doubtless stimulated by the knowledge that, had it not been made, Castlereagh would have gone to Parliament for an amending Bill, the last solution of the difficulty which the Court could contemplate with equanimity.<sup>2</sup>

So the quarrel was for the moment patched up. The Fort William College remained in existence for some years, though on lines much more restricted than those laid down by Wellesley, and Colleges for the training of Civilians were presently established at Haileybury and Addiscombe. Under the *Charter Act* of 1813, though the appointments to the Indian Service were still left to the Court of Directors, the Board of Control took power to approve the regulations made by the Court for their Training Colleges both in England and in India. The Haileybury college survived until the extinction of the Company in 1858, and fully justified its existence. For nearly thirty years the Professor of History and Political Economy was none other than the much misunderstood author of the *Essay on Population*—Thomas Robert Malthus. The teaching could hardly have been in more discreet hands.

To return to the Board and the Court, to Castlereagh and Wellesley. That Wellesley treated the Direc-

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 488, 430-41.

<sup>2</sup> For Draft Bill declaratory of the powers of the Board of Control, cf. I.O., H.S.M. 488, 491-512.

tors, who were, after all, his employers, with insolence and contempt no reader of his Correspondence can deny. Even Castlereagh, though generally in sympathy with his policy, found it necessary to reprove his precipitancy, and his irritating habit of reporting to the Directors only a *fait accompli*. It is only fair, however, to remember that it ordinarily took twelve months to get an answer from London, and much might happen in the interval. Nor did it always happen to our disadvantage. Thus, after the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens (1802) Wellesley was ordered to restore to the French, Pondicherry and the rest of their possessions in India. Pending further instructions he disregarded the order. Before the instructions arrived war had again (as Wellesley foresaw) broken out between England and Napoleon, and the Governor-General was, accordingly, instructed to recapture 'any ports or possessions which the French may have in India'. The order was superfluous.

Castlereagh's anticipations as to the probable duration of the Peace coincided precisely with those of Lord Wellesley. Thus Castlereagh, wrote to Dundas (19 October 1802) that it would afford him 'no small satisfaction at a moment when there is so strong a probability of a renewal of hostilities that the Cape is yet safe'.<sup>1</sup> He further reported that Pitt, whom he had just seen; cordially approved of the line taken by the Addington Ministry. 'The events lately passing on the Continent had given him much anxiety, and he saw no chance of rousing Europe to a sense of its own danger or the Chief Consul to some degree of reflexion, but in this Country's showing that it had made Peace in a tone of moderation but not of submission.'<sup>2</sup> Hardly, indeed, was the Treaty of Amiens concluded when Castlereagh submitted to the Cabinet a masterly memorandum on

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 488, 459-89.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 504, 13-14.

the situation. 'Unless we are prepared', he wrote, 'almost to invite fresh encroachments by our tameness and apparent insensibility we ought . . . fairly to give France to understand that . . . if she entertains the same desire for peace which we feel, she must abstain from encroachments which tend to alter both her maritime and continental relations with the other powers of Europe. Connected with this, some strong naval and military establishments, and a vigorous system of finance are as indispensable to give even to the peace we have concluded any chance of permanence as they are essential to our safety, in the event of hostilities being suddenly recommenced. And the frame of our establishments should be so contrived as to admit of a rapid extension at the outset of the war, so as to place us at once in security at home, whilst we are enabled to reap the full fruits of our maritime supremacy in striking an early blow against the colonies of the enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

Parenthetically it is interesting to observe the part which the youngest member of the Cabinet, occupying the lowliest place in the official hierarchy, was beginning to play in the direction of high policy. The occupation of Malta might perhaps be regarded as within the sphere of responsibility assigned to the President of the Board of Control. Malta, under the terms of the Treaty of Amiens, was to be restored to the Knights of St. John. But Malta was a stepping-stone to Egypt, and in a further memorandum Castlereagh urged that in view of the continued aggressions of Napoleon during a time of peace—notably the conquest of Switzerland—Malta should be retained, even at the cost of a renewal (which he regarded as in any case inevitable) of war with France. 'My opinion is', he wrote, 'that with Malta for seven years, Lampedusa for ever, Holland and

<sup>1</sup> C.C., V. 29-30.

position was rendered difficult not only by the Constitutional relations between his Board and the Court, but by the deepening mistrust of Wellesley's policy in Parliament and even in the Ministry. As far back as 27 September 1802 Castlereagh had thought it proper, in reference to the annexation of the Carnatic, to utter a word of warning. 'On the case as it stands explained in the papers already received' the Home Government, he wrote, was prepared to support the Governor-General, but 'it is necessary that your lordship should know that considerable doubts and difficulties have existed, and do exist, in the minds of many people in this country, which, I trust, after further reflection and discussion will be removed'.<sup>1</sup> The critics of Wellesley and his policy were neither few nor silent, and 'no pains are spared, not only to impress the public mind with the harshness and injustice of the transaction in itself, but also coupling it with the cessions in Oudh as also those in the neighbourhood of Surat . . . to prove that a systematic plan of territorial acquisition, inconsistent with the policy professed in the Act of 1793 has manifested itself in the late measures.'

Castlereagh was, however, at pains to insist that his own confidence in the Governor-General was undiminished; he begged him to remain another season in India—a desire in which the 'Chairs' cordially concurred, and, added Castlereagh (27 September 1802), 'I look with confidence to the winding up of your government being marked with as much solidity as its progress has been brilliant and commanding'.<sup>2</sup> In letter after letter he assures Wellesley that he can count upon his own 'sincere and cordial co-operation'; he tells him that Addington, too, 'has made every exertion on his behalf' and begs him 'not to let the temper of the Court disturb

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 481, 517 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Wellesley Despatches*, III, 41, and I.O., H.S.M. 481, 517.

## THE PRESIDENT'S DIFFICULTIES

him'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, he felt entitled to ask his old friend to give some little consideration to the difficulties with which, as President of the Board, he was himself confronted. 'Your Lordship is aware', he wrote (Nov. 15th 1802) 'how difficult and delicate a task it is for the person who fills my situation (particularly when strong feelings have once been excited) to manage such a body as the Court of Directors, so as to shield the person in yours from any unpleasant interference on their part'.<sup>2</sup>

Nor did the tension diminish as the days went by, for in August 1803 Castlereagh wrote to the Governor-General à propos of the opposition of the Court to the Fort William College:

'Your Lordship will perceive that if those in charge of the Governments abroad have occasionally to complain of mortifications and embarrassments from the proceedings of the Court of Directors, the superintending authority at home is not exempt from its share of difficulty and that we are all called upon in our turn to endure that which is equally repugnant to our understandings and our feelings.'<sup>3</sup>

At this moment, however, Castlereagh's mind was occupied less with the Indian than with the European situation, though the two problems were, as he plainly saw, inseparable. Thus writing to his colleague, Lord Hawkesbury, at the Foreign Office (19 August 1803), while still insistent that France must withdraw from Holland and Switzerland, he is even more insistent upon the 'effectual establishment of British Power in the Mediterranean', and he made an interesting suggestion. He would be prepared to hand over Malta to Russia provided that the Czar would undertake 'the perpetual

<sup>1</sup> cf., e.g. I.O., H.S.M. 505, i-iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Wellesley Despatches*, III, 92.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, IV, 40 (25 Aug. 1803).

military occupancy of it'—in other words would prevent it from falling into the hands of Napoleon—and would in exchange for Malta, hand over Corfu to Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> In the event, Great Britain, as sometimes happens, got the best of both worlds. At the general peace (1814-15) she not only retained Malta but secured a Protectorate over the Ionian Isles. By that time Castlereagh was himself in control of British Foreign Policy, and was also largely responsible for the lines on which the map of Europe was redrawn.

Ten years before Lord Castlereagh did his great work at Paris and Vienna Lord Wellesley had ceased to be Governor-General. That proud and masterful Pro-Consul had not held office for three years before he requested to be recalled. 'I have written to Dundas earnestly pressing to be allowed to return home. . . . For God's sake release me and let me embark, *emeritus*, in January 1801.'<sup>2</sup> So Wellesley wrote on March 9, 1800. At that time the primary motive was nostalgia. A year later it was increasing resentment at his treatment by the Directors, and lack of cordial support from the Board of Control. 'The Directors have been permitted to treat me in a manner which would have entirely destroyed the authority of a Governor-General of less personal influence and less determination . . . I am anxious to retire before I can be compelled to become the instrument of my own disgrace. . . . I believe the Court of Directors to be too strong for the Government at home; and I cannot suppose Mr. Dundas to retain any power of controlling them. . . .'<sup>3</sup>

Three times in the year 1802 did Lord Wellesley tender his resignation. But with the appointment of

<sup>1</sup> C.C., V. 75-82.

<sup>2</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, VI, 159, quoted by P. E. Roberts, to whose *India Under Wellesley* this chapter owes much.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Roberts from Brit. Mus. MSS.

Castlereagh to the India Office the situation, though never easy, was sensibly relieved. Castlereagh, alike on personal and on public grounds, was most reluctant to lose Wellesley's services. 'I own I feel most extremely anxious', wrote Castlereagh to Pitt (11 September 1802), 'that we may succeed in keeping him there for another year, being thoroughly persuaded that, peace being now made . . . the energy of his mind would pursue the principle of retrenchment as ardently as it has done other more animating considerations during the war. . . . There is much indisposition in the Court to Lord Wellesley . . . nothing can have been more unpleasant than the tone in which the Despatches have been written during the last year on both sides.'<sup>1</sup> That was true; but the Directors did not hesitate to 'acknowledge the zeal and ability which the Governor-General has displayed in the general management and superintendence of our affairs', and urged him to retain office until January 1804. Castlereagh rarely ended a letter without reiterating an earnest entreaty to the same effect. Lord Wellesley yielded, but by 1804 even Pitt was constrained to admit that Wellesley 'had acted most imprudently and illegally and that he could not be suffered to remain in the Government'. In 1805 Lord Wellesley bade farewell to India with thirty years of public life still ahead of him.

In July of the same year Castlereagh became Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, though, at Pitt's request, he retained the Presidency of the Board of Control until Pitt's ministry was broken up by his death (January 1806).

Not until 1870 was India connected with Great Britain by direct telegraphic cable. But despite the advantages accruing from its absence the triangular control established by the Act of 1784 proved in practice to be

<sup>1</sup> I.O., H.S.M. 504, 1-2—unhappily a characteristic example of Castlereagh's literary style.



clumsy, irritating and detrimental to British government in India.

No one who believes (as does every impartial commentator, foreign or English) that the extension of British rule has been, on balance, to the great advantage of the Indian peoples, can fail to acknowledge the immense debt which India owes to Lord Wellesley. No one holding that view can doubt that Lord Castlereagh was justified in extending to the Governor-General consistent, if not uncritical, support.

On the other hand it would be absurd to maintain that in the recurrent disputes between Wellesley and the Court of Directors, the Governor-General was always right and the Directors were always wrong. Lord Castlereagh, always a peace-maker, did his utmost to smooth away difficulties, to hold the scales even, and to work an almost unworkable machine. Nor can forgiveness be withheld from him if he was not consistently successful. The gift of sympathy is more often attributed to the Southern than to the Northern Irish, but it may safely be said that the Ulsterman at Whitehall showed much more sympathetic appreciation of his compatriot's difficulties in India than the brilliant Governor-General at Calcutta showed for the harassed President of the Board of Control.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR AND THE COLONIES (1805-1806)

LORD CASTLEREAGH served as President of the Board of Control both under Addington and under Pitt, and although a devoted disciple of Pitt his relations with the less distinguished chief were from the outset friendly. Soon after taking office Castlereagh wrote privately to Cornwallis: 'I have every reason to be perfectly satisfied with Mr. Addington's conduct and unqualified support.'<sup>1</sup> Addington, though not endowed with the brains of a Pitt or a Castlereagh, was a man of high character, and in intellectual stature was less puny than posterity has been permitted to suppose. Despite his 'faltering periods' and pompous manners, he won and retained the respect of Parliament, and enjoyed in full measure the confidence of his Sovereign. The feelings of George III towards Pitt and Addington respectively curiously anticipated those of his great-grandson for Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman. Unfortunately, however, for Addington's reputation, a hundred people are familiar with the defamatory lampoons of Canning for every one who is at pains to investigate the facts. The least tenacious memory can retain the jingling distich:

Pitt is to Addington,  
As London is to Paddington;

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<sup>1</sup> I.O.R. 504, 7.

# CASTLEREAGH

and most people are familiar with the somewhat more subtle satire of *Good Intentions*:

'Twere best no doubt the truth to tell  
 But still good soul *he means so well*  
 Others with necromantic skill,  
 May bend men's passions to their will.  
 . . . . .  
 In thee no magic arts surprise,  
 No tricks to cheat our wondering eyes;  
 . . . . .  
 Ne'er shall thy virtuous thoughts conspire  
 To wrap majestic Thames in fire!  
 . . . . .  
 Head of wisdom, soul of candour,  
 Happy Britain's guardian gander,  
 To rescue from the 'invading Gaul'  
 Her 'commerce, credit, capital'  
 While Rome's great goose could save alone  
 One capitol of senseless stone.

Canning's witty but malicious effusions did far more harm to their author than to their victim. In the ministry of 'All the Talents' Addington (by then Lord Sidmouth) was included; Canning was not. But Canning's wit got another chance. Sidmouth, he said, is like the small-pox, since everybody must have him once in their lives—an observation that sheds equal lustre on 'Doctor' Addington and Doctor Jenner. But this is to anticipate events.

Addington's Ministry was sufficiently competent to conclude a Peace (or truce) with France (1802); it could not long survive the renewal of war (18 May 1803). Exactly a year later Castlereagh furnished Lord Wellesley with a detailed account of the circumstances attending the change of Government and Pitt's resumption of office.<sup>1</sup>

Like Mr. Asquith in December 1916, and under conditions not dissimilar, Addington, in the spring of 1804,

<sup>1</sup> *Wellesley Despatches*, III. 370.

was prepared to reconstruct his Ministry, but not to resign, even to Pitt, the Premiership.<sup>1</sup>

Pitt naturally refused to listen to any proposal, except on the basis of his own return to the Premiership, with entire freedom as to the choice of his colleagues. Addington having tried in vain to make terms with him, resigned in May 1804. He refused the earldom and the pension pressed upon him by the Sovereign, and the King, though with great reluctance, accepted Addington's resignation and, with equal reluctance, recalled Pitt.

Pitt then urged the King to allow him to effect a Coalition. The King agreed to the inclusion of the Whig leaders, provided Fox was excluded. Fox, with admirable restraint and patriotism, advised both Grenville and his own friends to accept Pitt's offer. But Grenville, no less decidedly than Spencer and Windham, refused. The Ministry consequently had to be made up of Pittite and Addingtonian Tories, nine of whom (out of eleven) were in the House of Lords. Addington himself did not join the Ministry until January 1805 when he accepted the Presidency of the Council with a peerage. Five months of office under Pitt were too much for him, and in June he resigned. The Cabinet really consisted (as the wits had it) of William and Pitt. Castlereagh was Pitt's chief lieutenant—his only Cabinet colleague—in the House of Commons. In June 1805 he succeeded Lord Camden as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, but until Pitt's death he retained also his place as President of the Board of Control.

The doubling of the posts was the less onerous since Castlereagh, as already indicated, had, from his accession to the India Office, regarded the struggle against Napoleon as an integral whole. The paramountcy asserted by Wellesley over the great Indian States, permeated as

<sup>1</sup> Pellew: *Sidmouth*, II. 117.

they were by French influence, was regarded by Castlereagh as one factor in a world-problem. But from the time that the war was renewed Castlereagh's attention was of necessity concentrated more and more upon the European aspect of the struggle.

But not exclusively. Nearly 300 pages of the fifth volume of the *Castlereagh Correspondence* are occupied by letters relative to the affairs of the Middle East—and in particular with letters exchanged between Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Harford Jones (1764-1847). The latter had, early in life, entered the service of the East India Company, and, having acquired great proficiency in Oriental languages, was appointed Resident at Bagdad in 1801 and in 1805 Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Persia.

Ever since the Czarina Catherine had conquered the Caucasus there had been intermittent war between Russia and Persia, and in the early years of the nineteenth century the former was making rapid progress in Central Asia. The Shah of Persia was, therefore, only too ready to welcome the advances pressed upon him by Napoleon. Napoleon was becoming more and more obsessed by the idea of destroying British power in the Far East. Persia was a stage on the way to India. Accordingly, during the year 1806 no fewer than three French agents were sent to Teheran, and in the following year a Persian envoy met Napoleon in Poland and concluded with him the Treaty of Finkenstein. The Shah promised to adhere to the Continental system, to break off his relations with Great Britain, confiscate all British goods, exclude British shipping from his ports, stir up the Afghans against British India, and himself join in the attack against British power in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

But we anticipate the sequence of events. If Napoleon

<sup>1</sup> cf. Driault: *La politique orientale de Napoleon* (passim) and Marriott: *Eastern Question*, 156-9.

had an eye on India Lord Wellesley, whose vigilance nothing escaped, had an eye on Persia, and in 1799, for the first time since the days of Queen Elizabeth, an English envoy had been despatched by him to Teheran. Captain (afterwards Sir John) Malcolm was his chosen emissary, and in 1801 Malcolm concluded a series of treaties. One provided for unrestricted trade between India and Persia and for the cession to the East India Company of certain islands in the Persian Gulf—a stipulation that was never executed. A second—political—treaty bound the Shah to exclude the French from Persia, and to assist the Company in curbing the ambitions of the Ameer Zemann Shah.<sup>1</sup> Malcolm returned to India by way of Bagdad where he seconded the anti-Gallic activities of Harford Jones.

The pre-occupation of British agents abroad with Napoleon's activities in the Near and Middle East is further evidenced by the correspondence of the Earl of Elgin, then British Ambassador at Constantinople, both with Leadenhall Street and with Lord Castlereagh. A letter to the Directors (12 February 1802) contains the interesting suggestion that 'it would be highly advisable to make a settlement at such a place as Aden, safe and accessible at all times to our shipping', and also capable of affording 'a great security against any future attempt of the French to affect our East India possessions by the way of the eastern provinces of Turkey'.<sup>2</sup>

The space devoted in the *Castlereagh Correspondence* to the affairs of Persia and the Ottoman Empire sufficiently indicates the importance attached to them by the minister.

Nevertheless, Lord Castlereagh's more immediate attention was concentrated upon the European conflict, and if Castlereagh was concentrating his mind upon Europe, Napoleon was concentrating his mind upon England.

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VI. 162.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 167.

From England it had indeed from the outset of his career rarely been diverted. Coalitions against France might be formed; Coalitions might dissolve; but England was *the* enemy. More than ever was that the case after the renewal of war in 1803. Years ago, under the orders of the Directory (1798) General Buonaparte had made a careful inspection of the northern coast of France and as a result had resolved to make his attack upon England—in Egypt. That attack having failed he resolved, after the renewal of the war, on direct invasion. A great camp was formed at Boulogne; an army of 100,000 men assembled, and a flotilla of flat-bottomed boats constructed to convey the army across the channel. All that Napoleon required of his admirals was to keep the Channel 'free' for him for three days—even twenty-four hours would suffice.

Napoleon, however, failed to realize that naval strategy is something very different from military strategy. The issue was decided not in the Channel but off Cape Trafalgar. The French admiralty knew their business and devised an admirable plan which was only just countered by the sagacity and courage of Nelson and Collingwood.

The moment Napoleon realized that the plans of his Admiralty had miscarried (August 1805) the Boulogne camp was broken up and the great army was on the march for the Rhine and the upper Danube. If the ultimate defeat of Napoleon was implicit in Nelson's great victory at Trafalgar (21 October), Napoleon was still on land irresistible. On the day before Trafalgar the Austrian Commander Mack surrendered to Napoleon at Ulm; Vienna was occupied by Murat on November 13, and on December 2 Napoleon himself inflicted a crushing defeat upon the armies of Austria and Russia at Austerlitz.

Austerlitz shattered the third Coalition and killed Pitt.

Pitt's death (23 January 1806) deprived his Administration of its lynch-pin, and a Ministry 'of all the talents' was formed under Grenville. But no Ministry could pretend to comprise 'all the talents' from which both Canning and Castlereagh were excluded.

Castlereagh's great days were, indeed, still to come, but to have been at the War Office while Napoleon's great army was still in camp at Boulogne, to have been called upon to make effective preparations to resist threatened invasions was enough to test the nerve of any man. Castlereagh stood the test triumphantly. After the departure of the Boulogne army Castlereagh was deluged with suggestions for an attack by means of 'Congreve rockets' and other ingenious devices upon the flotilla which Napoleon had left behind. Castlereagh was captivated by the idea and drafted detailed instructions for the conduct of the attack. 'It is proposed', he wrote, 'to make an attempt to set fire to the flotilla by successive discharges of rockets from twelve launches, each carrying forty-eight rockets. . . . When everything is prepared and the weather favourable, if the enemy's vessels are reported not to be without the harbour, the squadron, consisting of such number of vessels as may be requisite to protect the launches and to annoy the enemy with shells after the rockets have been discharged, to sail from Walmer Roads so as to arrive off Boulogne at half ebb, which will secure the attack from interruption from the enemy's boats until the following flood . . . the attack to be made as soon after dark as the tide will permit when the lights in the houses at Boulogne may serve as a direction both for the launches rowing in and for directing the rockets. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Nothing was in fact accomplished by the expedition, and the above passage is quoted not for its intrinsic importance, but merely to illustrate the meticulous atten-

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum dated Sept. 24 1805—C.C., V. 106-7.



tion bestowed by Castlereagh upon the work of his Department.

Matters less fanciful and more important than the destruction of the flat-bottomed boats were soon engaging the attention of the Minister for War and the Colonies. One was the reconquest of Cape Colony, which in compliance with the Treaty of Amiens had, in February 1803, been restored to the Dutch. Within three months of its restoration war broke out again between Great Britain and the Batavian Republic—now virtually incorporated in France. That a strategic point so important as the Cape must again be taken by Great Britain was obvious, but it was not until January 4 1806 that a British fleet, with 7,000 men on board, anchored off Table Bay. The fleet was under the command of Captain Sir Home Popham, the troops under that of Major-General Sir David Baird. General Willem Janssens, the Dutch Governor and Commander-in-Chief, had at his disposal only about 2,000 men, of doubtful quality, but he courageously resisted reconquest, and in a battle which ensued lost some 700 men. The British loss was 15 killed and 189 wounded. On January 10th articles of capitulation were signed, and General Baird, under instructions previously issued by Lord Castlereagh, assumed the civil government of the settlement as H.M. Lieutenant-Governor. Thus did South Africa finally pass to the British Crown.

The conquest of Cape Colony was, in historical perspective, of greater significance to England than anything which was happening on the Continent of Europe. For the moment, however, Castlereagh and his colleagues were more concerned about North Germany than South Africa.

Until 1803 the fact of England's belligerency had been held not to involve the German possessions of the English King; the neutralization of Hanover had consequently been respected. But on the renewal of war

(May 1803) the French occupied Hanover practically without resistance. Prussia was naturally perturbed, but not to the extent of moving from the attitude of neutrality she had persistently maintained since 1795. In July 1803 a French force was sent to Cuxhaven, which belonged to the city of Hamburg, in order to keep out English goods seeking entrance into Germany by the Elbe and the Weser. England's immediate reply was to threaten a blockade of the two rivers. Here, again, Prussia's interests were vitally involved, but she still hesitated to throw in her lot with the new (the 'Third') Coalition formed (1805) by Pitt.

. At last, however, the Prussian worm turned. Early in October news reached Berlin that Marshall Bernadotte, in order to reach Bavaria in the minimum of time, had marched his troops without permission through the Prussian Principality of Anspach.

Pitt and Castlereagh had, meanwhile, decided to despatch a large force to North Germany. They hoped that the expedition would accomplish more than one object: that it would co-operate with forces from Russia and Sweden, that it would raise Hanover, Brunswick, and North Germany against Napoleon, and above all that it would strengthen the trembling knees and confirm the vacillating will of King Frederick William of Prussia. The expedition was planned on an exceptionally elaborate scale and no detail in regard to its composition and equipment escaped the vigilant eye of the Minister for War. Unfortunately the preparations took longer than was expected, winds were almost consistently contrary, and though the first of three divisions sailed on October 16—five days before Trafalgar—it was not until December 22 that the third division, having been compelled by adverse winds to put back into harbour, finally set sail, just three weeks after Napoleon had shattered the Coalition at Austerlitz. The extra-

ordinary rapidity of Napoleon's movements certainly upset all Castlereagh's elaborately conceived but tardily executed plans. Had the expedition been despatched directly after the break-up of the camp at Boulogne, had Prussia acted promptly after the violation of her Anspach territory, the disasters of the Ulm-Austerlitz campaign might, as Alison truly says, have been 'remedied or averted'. Had 'the combined forces of Austria, Russia, Prussia and Great Britain been arrayed in the open field against France' Austerlitz might well have been Napoleon's Leipsic.<sup>1</sup> As things turned out, the British Cabinet decided, and wisely, on the immediate recall of the expedition, and the whole force, augmented by an additional 6,000 Hanoverians, returned in safety to these shores. Meanwhile, the King of Prussia, infuriated by Bernadotte's insolence at Anspach, had sent off an ultimatum to Napoleon, who had established his headquarters (29 November 1805) at Brünn. Count Haugwitz, the Prussian envoy, was cajoled with half-promises until Napoleon had won his victory at Austerlitz and had dictated a humiliating peace to Austria at Pressburg. Even more humiliating were the terms he dictated to an undefeated Prussia at Schönbrunn. Prussia was required to cede Anspach to Bavaria, to close the ports of North Germany to English ships and commerce, and to accept Hanover as a gift from Napoleon. Frederick William's obstinate adherence to the policy of neutrality had at last brought him to the position of a receiver of stolen goods.

In bestowing the embarrassing gift of Hanover upon Prussia Napoleon's object was, of course, to force her into war with England. Prussia protested to Great Britain that her occupation of the Electorate would be merely temporary, but Fox was moved to describe her conduct as a 'compound of everything that is contemp-

<sup>1</sup> Alison: *op. cit.*, I, 194, and *C.C.*, VI, 6-102.

tible in servility with everything that is odious in rapacity.' The description was just, but England treated the matter with disconcerting indifference. She seized some 400 Prussian ships which happened at the moment to be in English ports, she annihilated the foreign trade of Prussia, but otherwise took little notice of this formidable accession to the ranks of her enemies.

But the cup of Prussia's humiliation was not yet full. The Grenville Ministry had (1806) opened negotiations for a peace with Napoleon, and Napoleon had accepted, as a basis for bargaining, the restoration of Hanover. This insult stung even Frederick William to the quick. The news of it reached Berlin on August 6th and three days later orders were given for the mobilization of the army. On October 1st 1806, Prussia, after eleven years of inglorious neutrality, declared war. Napoleon retorted with a swift and stunning blow. On October 14th the Prussian army suffered disastrous defeat at Jena and Auerstadt; before the end of the month Napoleon was master of the whole of Brandenburg, and from Berlin he issued the famous Decree initiating the Continental System.

Prussia was crushed; Austria was crushed; and in 1807 Russia, defeated at Friedland, made peace with the conqueror at Tilsit. Napoleon was master of the Continent; England was mistress of the Seas. Neutrals there were to be none. England isolated in Europe was to be attacked in Asia. If she could not be reached by invasion from the Continent, a Franco-Russian army must march to India. Nelson's great victory at Trafalgar, the irresistible sea-power of England, had convinced Napoleon that it was easier to transport his armies across thousands of miles of land than across the twenty miles of water that separated Boulogne from Dover.

When the bargain with Alexander was struck at Tilsit,

the Tories were again in power in England; Castlereagh was once more installed at the War Office.

The Grenville Ministry, despite its galaxy of talent, had lasted little more than a year (January 1806–March 1807). It had lost its most brilliant member by Fox's death in September 1806, and though it made history by the abolition of the slave trade (1807), it was, in the March of that year, dismissed by the King. To a Bill for 'enabling persons of every religious persuasion to serve in the army and navy' the King raised such invincible objections that the ministry withdrew it. The King then required his ministers to give a written pledge that they would not again propose any concessions to the Roman Catholics. On their respectful refusal to give the pledge they were summarily dismissed.

The King, therefore, sent for Lord Hawkesbury and Lord Eldon, having decided to make the former Prime Minister and again to entrust the Great Seal to Lord Eldon. But the Tory Party was not yet prepared to accept Hawkesbury as their leader, and the King was accordingly persuaded to confide to the Duke of Portland the difficult task of forming a new administration out of the somewhat discordant elements which had coalesced under Pitt. Portland was nominally a Whig, he was in his seventieth year, the victim of an excruciating disease, his political record was far from distinguished, and his abilities were mediocre, but he had immense borough influence (as was demonstrated a few months later) and his appointment avoided the personal questions which so frequently embarrass a new Administration. Portland's premiership was, however, entirely nominal. He made not a single speech in the House of Lords, if indeed he ever attended it. Lord Hawkesbury led the House of Lords; Spencer Perceval the House of Commons. The new ministry was described by a contemporary as the 'Government of Departments'. In

## THE PORTLAND MINISTRY

the absence of a real Prime Ministry a Government is apt to be departmental. But the Departments were strongly manned. Portland's Ministry included five future Prime Ministers. Of these Lord Hawkesbury (afterwards Liverpool) took the Home Office, and Canning the Foreign Office; Spencer Perceval became Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Arthur Wellesley, Chief Secretary for Ireland, while Lord Palmerston served his official apprenticeship as a Civil Lord of the Admiralty. Greater than any of the men who actually became Prime Minister was Lord Castlereagh who for ten years (1812-22) was the most powerful member of the Liverpool Government and exercised upon the affairs of Europe an influence second only, if it was second, to that of Prince Metternich. On the formation of the Portland Administration Castlereagh resumed the office of Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.

## CHAPTER IX

### AT THE WAR OFFICE—CASTLEREAGH AND NAPOLEON

CASTLEREAGH's second tenure of the War Office lasted from March 1807 to September 1809. It thus coincided with the crisis of the contest between Great Britain and Napoleon.

The first difficulty encountered by the new ministry was, however, domestic. The Constitutional question involved in the dismissal of the Grenville Ministry was too grave to escape animadversion at the hands of parliamentary critics. When Parliament reassembled after the change of Government (8 April 1807), the ministry was immediately challenged in both Houses on the Constitutional issue. Mr. Brand moved in the Commons 'that it is contrary to the first duties of the confidential servants of the Crown to restrain themselves by any pledge expressed or implied from offering to the King any advice which the course of circumstances may render necessary for the welfare and security of the empire'. The motion was naturally opposed by the new ministers, many of whom, including Lord Castlereagh, took part, in one House or the other, in the debate that ensued. Castlereagh justly complained that the late ministers had not only been guilty of 'introducing His Majesty's name and personal character into the debate' but had 'given the minutes of the Cabinet to persons who were not of the Cabinet—nor even of the Privy Council'—a proceeding which he regarded as 'a high crime and misdemeanour'. On the merits of

the question he defended the action of the King whose mind, as his late ministers well knew, 'was irrevocably made up on the subject, not from political considerations, but from a paramount religious feeling'. 'Parliament', he declared, 'as well as the nation had determined to stand by the Crown.' His bold assertion was verified by the event. After an acrimonious debate and an exciting division, the ministry carried the Orders of the Day in an unusually full House by a majority of 46 (244 against 198). A similar motion in the House of Lords had been defeated, despite a memorable speech in its favour by Lord Erskine, by a majority of 81.<sup>1</sup>

The new ministry had escaped defeat but their position in the House of Commons was precarious, and though the Parliament was not yet six months old they decided to appeal to the country.

Parliament was dissolved on April 30, and the ensuing election immensely strengthened the position of the Government. In the Lords the Address was carried by 93 (160 to 67), and in the Commons, in the fullest House that had ever been known, by 195 (350 to 155). The Parliament elected in 1807 witnessed two changes in the Premiership and lasted for five and a half years.

Castlereagh sat throughout this period for the pocket borough of Plympton. First elected for it at the General Election in October 1806, he was re-elected on taking office under Portland in April 1807, again at the General Election in May of the same year, and finally, on resuming office at the invitation of Lord Liverpool, in June 1812. At the General Election in October 1812 he went back to his original constituency, Co. Down.

His first task on resuming his work at the War Office was to prepare and submit to the Cabinet a Memorandum on the strength of the military forces which was eminently unsatisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> Hans. Deb., 1st Series, ix. 231-475.



On the break-up of Pitt's last Government Castlereagh had been succeeded at the War Office by William Windham, who had served Pitt in a similar capacity from 1794 to 1801. It was not, therefore, remarkable that the military record of the Grenville Ministry should have been a melancholy repetition of the worst blunders of Pitt's Government. For those blunders Windham was primarily responsible. On resuming office in 1806 he showed that he had 'learnt nothing and forgotten nothing'. Once again, instead of concentrated effort at a crucial point he frittered away our exiguous resources upon a number of isolated and frivolous expeditions, such as the expedition under Popham to South America.

Against this policy Castlereagh had directed his well-informed criticism. Nor was he less critical of Windham's scheme of Army Reorganization. The scheme was based on two principles: short service for the Regular Army, and liability to military training for the entire manhood of the nation, who were to undergo military instruction in batches of 200,000 at a time. Whatever the merits of a scheme of universal military instruction, or—on general grounds—of the principle of 'short service', it is plain that, adopted in the middle of a great war, 'short service' was at best a very questionable experiment. The scheme was, accordingly, strongly opposed not only in the House of Commons by Castlereagh, but by the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York, and by Sir John Moore, perhaps the greatest soldier of that day, and then rapidly approaching the zenith of his fame.

On resuming office in 1807 Castlereagh was, consequently, confronted by a difficult situation. The 'total force of Regulars and Militia at home and abroad, exclusive of artillery,' he wrote, 'is in rank and file 259,067 of which 93,677 are serving abroad'. Of the 165,390 infantry and cavalry at home 33,622 were 'fit

for immediate foreign service'.<sup>1</sup> But the failure (foreseen and foretold by Castlereagh) of Windham's Training Act had left the United Kingdom more defenceless than ever. Consequently not more than 11,000 men could, in his judgement, be spared for further operations on the Continent.

In a further Memorandum (12 May 1807) Castlereagh made a number of detailed suggestions for an immediate augmentation of the Regular Army.<sup>2</sup> Before this Memorandum could be presented to his colleagues Lord Castlereagh was the unhappy recipient of bad news from all quarters of the globe. From South America came news of General Whitelocke's ('Whitefeather's') failure to redeem Popham's blunders; from the Eastern Mediterranean of Admiral Duckworth's failure before Constantinople; worst of all was the news from India. In May 1807 intelligence reached Castlereagh that in the previous July a mutiny had broken out among the Madras Sepoys at Vellore. The mutiny was provoked by certain stupid and tactless orders issued by the local Commander-in-Chief, Sir John Cradock, with the sanction of Lord William Bentinck, the Governor. On July 10 the Sepoys suddenly seized the fort and massacred two European companies, 113 strong, including the officers. Troops summoned from Arcot took swift vengeance on the mutineers, but the gravity of the local situation was increased by the presence at Vellore of Tippu's family and some thousands of their dependents. The complicity of Tippu's sons, though suspected, was never proved, but they and their relatives were, as a matter of precaution, sent to Calcutta. Lord William Bentinck and Sir John Cradock were, very properly,

<sup>1</sup> These figures differ slightly from those given by Fortescue: *History of the British Army*, VI. 39, but are taken direct from Castlereagh's Memorandum (C.C., VIII. 46 f.).

<sup>2</sup> C.C., VIII. 53-62.

recalled by the Directors. Lord Minto had superseded Sir George Barlow as Governor-General in 1807, and by his wise moderation a normal situation was speedily restored.

Castlereagh's experience at the India Office naturally quickened his appreciation of the significance of events of this character in India. Accordingly, though the immediate crisis appeared to have been surmounted, he promptly despatched 4,000 men to India.

Even more alarming was the military and political situation on the European Continent. In 1807 that situation underwent a rapid and startling change. The Czar Alexander was naturally impressed by the crushing defeats inflicted by Napoleon upon Austria and Prussia, and at the same time was disgusted by the failure of England either to support him with an adequate army on the Baltic, or to force the narrow straits and come to his assistance in the Black Sea. On June 14 1807, the Russians were themselves decisively defeated at Friedland and the great fortresses of Danzig and Königsberg fell into the hands of Napoleon. The Czar accordingly decided to abandon his ally Prussia and to come to terms with the Emperor of the French. An armistice was concluded on June 21st; and on June 25th the historic interview between the two Emperors took place in a floating pavilion moored in the middle of the Niemen. The bargain was soon struck. Prussia was to be dismembered; England to be brought to her knees by the strangulation of her commerce; the Czar of Russia and the 'New Charlemagne' were then to divide the world between them. The detailed terms of the bargain were embodied in the Treaty of Tilsit. Of its public articles the one which most vitally affected Great Britain was that Prussia was to shut out all British goods. Even more significant was the secret agreement between Alexander and Napoleon. This provided that

## THE TILSIT CONSPIRACY

Russia should restore the Ionian Isles to France and should make common cause with her if England did not come to terms before November 1st. In return, Russia was to get Finland from Sweden, and from Turkey the long-coveted Danubian Principalities—Moldavia and Wallachia; while she was to join France in compelling Sweden, Denmark and Portugal to close their ports to English vessels and make war upon England.

Plainly the crisis of the long struggle had come. Between Napoleon and England it was to be war to the knife. Information about the negotiations at Tilsit reached the British Government on July 16. The source of the information, despite much laborious research,<sup>1</sup> still remains uncertain; the information itself was neither precise nor direct, but a large amount of indirect and circumstantial evidence was at the disposal of the British Government, and though the items when considered separately lacked definiteness their cumulative effect was almost conclusive.<sup>2</sup> The broad fact was clear and indisputable. No neutrality would henceforward be recognized by Napoleon: Continental States which were not with him were against him; the navies of 'neutrals' were to be absorbed into the navy of France.

Denmark was to be the first victim of the new policy. On receiving this information Canning and Castlereagh acted with commendable promptitude. On July 16

<sup>1</sup> Notably by Dr. J. Holland Rose. cf. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (November 1905).

<sup>2</sup> Lord Colchester in his *Diary*, II. 131, writes: 'It was not until ten years later that the Ministry were entitled, by the death of the person from whom they received the information of the secret articles of the Treaty of Tilsit, fully to justify the act of sending the expedition'. The matter was examined in the light of all the available evidence by the late Sir John Hall in his *Four Famous Mysteries*, (1922); but the source of the information (though now known) still remains an official secret.

Canning sent secret instructions to Mr. Brooke Taylor, British agent at Copenhagen, and informed him that a British fleet was at once to be sent to the Sound with instructions to (i) co-operate with Sweden for the defence of that country; (ii) protect the reinforcements that might be sent to the Anglo-Swedish expedition then at Stralsund and Rügen; and (iii) protect British commerce.<sup>1</sup> Three days later the order was given for the immediate preparation of fifty-one warships for 'a particular service', under Admiral Gambier (19 July), and on the same day thirty-one warships at sea were assigned to the same duty. Meanwhile, 'at one o'clock on the morning of the 18th of July Mr. Francis Jackson, of the diplomatic service, and staying at the moment with Lord Spencer, was knocked up, out of his bed in Northamptonshire by a message from Mr. Canning, bidding him to hasten to London at once, and be ready to sail from Yarmouth within twelve hours of his arrival.'<sup>2</sup> Jackson was to go to Kiel, where the Crown Prince of Denmark was then residing, and endeavour to effect an amicable settlement, but was instructed to require as an indispensable condition a temporary deposit of the Danish fleet. On July 26th Admiral Gambier sailed from Yarmouth in command of eighty-one ships of war, including sixteen ships of the line in addition to many smaller vessels. Jackson sailed for Kiel on August 2nd. Thanks to the energy displayed by Castlereagh from the moment he took over the War Office from Windham, the military contingent was ready to start within a fortnight of the reception of the first information from Tilsit. Lord Cathcart, a soldier of experience but of mediocre ability, then at Rügen, was to command the expedition, and Sir Arthur Wellesley was in command of four and

<sup>1</sup> See Rose, *ap. English Historical Review* (October 1901).

<sup>2</sup> F. J. Jackson to Sir George Jackson (*Diaries of Sir George Jackson*, II. 187).

## THE DANISH FLEET

a half choice battalions known as the Reserve. On July 29th the transports left Yarmouth with 18,000 men of all ranks on board and arrived off Elsinore by August 8th.

The Danish Government was informed that it must accept an immediate alliance with England and must hand over to her the whole of their fleet as 'a sacred deposit and with a solemn convention as to its restoration at the conclusion of the war'. In this event England would agree to pay Denmark £100,000 a year as interest on the 'deposit' and to restore the fleet, at the conclusion of a general peace, 'in the same condition and state of equipment as when received under the protection of the British flag'.

Denmark was between the devil and the deep sea. The British demands were, not unnaturally, rejected; Copenhagen was consequently invested by the British army and, after the city had suffered severely from a bombardment of three days (2-5 September) a capitulation was concluded (7 September), and all the ships of war, with the naval stores of every kind in the Royal arsenals, were given up to the British forces. The latter reached England with their prize early in October.

The action of the British Government was attacked at the time, and has since been denounced as a 'shameful deed of high-handed violence'.<sup>1</sup> More reasonable critics deny that 'the British Government had the last excuse of an urgent and overwhelming necessity',<sup>2</sup> and maintain that the Danish fleet was insufficient to have turned the scale against the victors of Trafalgar. But the Danish fleet was far from negligible. It consisted of eighteen sail of the line, fifteen frigates, six brigs and twenty-five gunboats, beside five other ships which were destroyed as not being worth removal. 'Trafalgar

<sup>1</sup> Sloane: *Life of Napoleon*.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Fyffe: *Modern Europe*, I. 395.

itself', says Alison, 'could not present so splendid an array of prizes'. And he adds: 'The naval stores brought away were of proportional magnitude; and the guns taken . . . were 3,500.' To suggest that such an addition to the naval resources of France was negligible is simply grotesque; to deny that but for the prompt and, if we will, 'high-handed' action of the British Government Napoleon would have acquired it, is, in the face of accumulated evidence, no longer possible.

The action of Castlereagh and his colleagues has, then, a two-fold justification: it was necessary, and it was successful. Wilberforce, a fairly detached observer, was doubtful about the moral no less than the political aspects of the Copenhagen affair. 'How shocking are the accounts from Copenhagen! Alas! Alas! I cannot but greatly doubt the policy of changing so great a number of men from cold into most willing and energetic allies of France. They must think us the most unjust and cruel of bullying despots.' Such are the reflections in his Diary for October 20 1807. But on November 27 he writes to a friend: 'It was absolutely essential to deprive the Danes of a fleet which combined with that of Russia would otherwise have soon conveyed a French army to Ireland or Scotland, or have forced us to detach to the North so large a proportion of our naval strength as would have left us open to attack in the south and west of the two islands.'<sup>1</sup> But perhaps the best evidence of Napoleon's designs and the best apology for the action of the British Government is supplied by Napoleon's own conduct when he learnt that the Tilsit conspiracy had been checkmated. He was driven (if Fouché<sup>2</sup> may be believed) into transports of rage. 'Blood and fire', he wrathfully exclaimed, 'have made the British masters of Copenhagen.' But

<sup>1</sup> Wilberforce: *Life of Wilberforce*, III. 344-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoires*, II. 37. But they are no longer accepted as authentic.

if the Emperor of the French was exasperated by the British *coup* at Copenhagen, the effect upon his Russian ally was exactly the reverse. 'The tone of the Russian Cabinet has become much more conciliatory', wrote Castlereagh to Lord Cathcart, 'since they heard of your operations at Copenhagen.'

When Parliament met in January 1808 the whole question of the expedition to Copenhagen was debated. On January 28 Lord Castlereagh, in a speech of studied moderation, moved a vote of thanks to Lord Cathcart, to Admiral Gambier and the officers and men under their respective commands. Castlereagh admitted that the duty of coercing Denmark was a painful one, but claimed that by the despatch of a strong force, naval and military, ministers had taken the most effectual means of minimizing the suffering inflicted upon the Danes, and also the loss of British lives. As a fact the British losses in killed and wounded amounted to no more than 300 men—a conclusive vindication of the ample preparations made by the Government. The vote was opposed by Windham, among others, but was carried by 100 votes against 19.

So much for the military execution of the policy adopted by the Government. A strong indictment of the policy itself was made on February 3rd when the Government got a majority of 145 (253 votes against 108). Both Canning and Castlereagh took part in the debate. Canning, in one of his most effective speeches, triumphantly vindicated the action of the Government. Castlereagh, speaking more briefly towards the close of the debate, was content to reply to detailed criticisms. One such criticism was that the work was left half-finished and that Zealand ought to have been held as a military station. Castlereagh made it clear that the point had not escaped the attention of the Government but that their military advisers had convinced them



that 'the force necessary for the defence of that island was far greater than this country could spare in the state of military poverty in which the former Administration had left us'—an excellent debating point, driven home with effect. The debate, as a whole, clearly proved that the new Government, provided that they pursued a vigorous policy, could count confidently on the support of Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

That support was sorely needed in regard to the long series of British operations just about to open in the Peninsula.

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, x. 267-87, 310-42, 350-83.

## CHAPTER X

### AT THE WAR OFFICE—CASTLEREAGH AND MOORE—THE WALCHEREN EXPEDITION

THE intended seizure of the Danish fleet was only one of the cards in Napoleon's hand. Portugal was another. Two months after the bombardment of Copenhagen, a French army under Marshal Junot occupied Lisbon.

Portugal like Denmark possessed a fleet; Portugal like Denmark was a neutral, though her neutrality was as friendly to Great Britain as that of Denmark was the reverse. But neutrality was no longer permissible. 'You must break either with England or with France.' Such was Napoleon's ultimatum to the Portuguese ambassador in Paris. Before the end of August 1807 40,000 men were massed at Bayonne ready to enforce his decree. Portugal was, like Denmark, on the horns of a dilemma, and sought to escape by obtaining from a friendly England permission to comply, temporarily, with Napoleon's demands. The English ministry proposed as an alternative that the Prince Regent of Portugal and his Government should withdraw to the great Portuguese colony of Brazil. Napoleon had announced in the *Moniteur* that 'the House of Braganza had ceased to reign'; the French army under Junot was rapidly approaching Lisbon; accordingly, on November 29, the Prince Regent, with the Royal Family, the ministers and 15,000 loyal followers, embarked at the Tagus and set sail for Rio de Janeiro.

For the second time, in this momentous year, had

the energy of Canning and Castlereagh frustrated the designs of Napoleon. Junot occupied Lisbon without resistance, but the birds had flown. The Portuguese fleet, under the escort of British ships of war, was on its way to South America. Another portion of the British fleet remained on guard at the mouth of the Tagus. The British Government had won the first round in the great fight in the Peninsula.

The Peninsular War opened a new chapter in the history of Europe. With that chapter Castlereagh's fame as a statesman is inextricably bound up. If he had not actually foreseen Napoleon's attack upon the Peninsula he had prepared to meet it. Castlereagh's military scheme, laid before the Cabinet in December 1807, was carefully thought out, and on it was based the military policy of the country until the close of the Napoleonic war. There was to be (i) a regular army, 'liable for service in or out of the country' of 220,000 men, to be kept up by ordinary recruiting and by volunteering from the militia; (ii) a regular militia of 80,000 men in Great Britain and 40,000 in Ireland; (iii) a 'sedentary militia', to be trained for 28 days, but not to leave their counties except in case of invasion or rebellion—200,000 men; (iv) 180,000 'volunteers of the best description'; and (v) a body of some 400,000 trained men, taught the use of the firelock and ordinary drill, not as yet organized in battalions, but available to fill up vacancies in the militia. Together with 150,000 sailors, marines and sea fencibles the scheme, it was calculated, should provide a total force of some 1,200,000 men available, in case of emergency, for the defence of the country. Castlereagh's scheme was adopted in its entirety by the Cabinet; it was put to a severe test during the next seven years, and it responded to the test with conspicuous success.

## THE PENINSULAR WAR

Nor was the test long delayed. Napoleon's attack on Portugal was merely the prelude to the great drama which for the next six years was to occupy the stage. Spain had withdrawn from the first coalition in 1795 and for the last twelve years Charles IV—one of the feeblest of the Spanish Bourbons—had been virtually the vassal of France. But the mere existence of a Bourbon monarch was an offence in the eyes of Napoleon. 'Un Bourbon sur le trône d'Espagne, c'est un voisin trop dangereux.' He decided, therefore, with the help of the Spanish minister Godoy, to expel the Bourbons from Madrid, and to put one of his brothers on the Spanish throne. The northern provinces of Spain were, early in 1808, occupied by a French army; King Charles IV and Ferdinand Prince of the Asturias were successively compelled to renounce the throne, and a handful of Spanish notables, lured by Napoleon to Bayonne, were induced to offer the vacant crown to Joseph Buonaparte. In July, Joseph was duly crowned at Madrid.

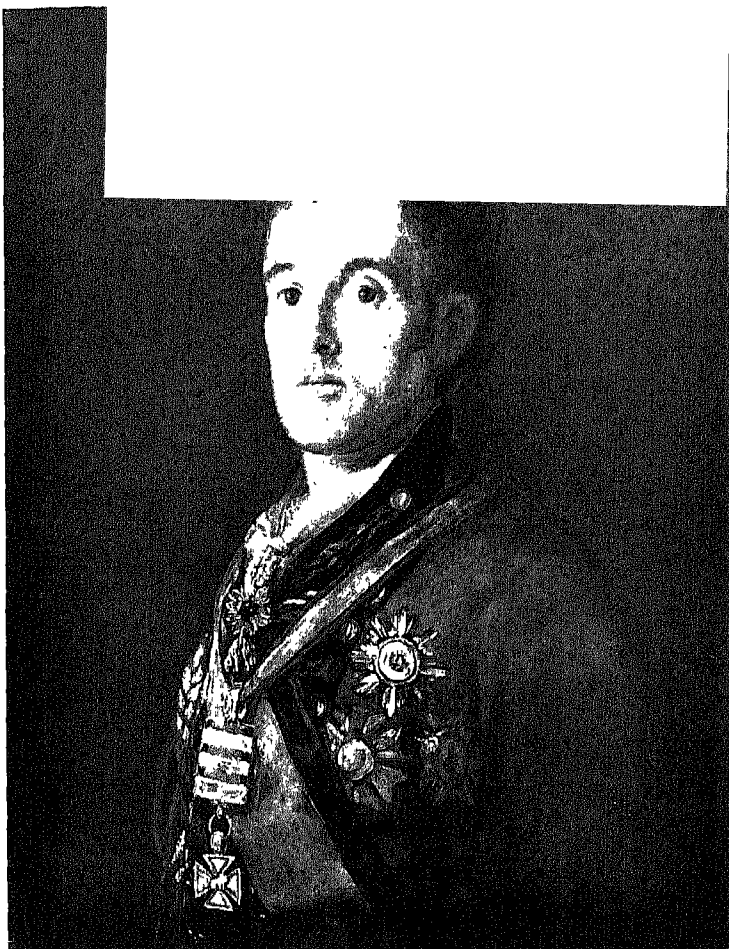
But it was one thing to occupy Madrid and put a Buonaparte on the throne; it was another to conquer Spain. In all his campaigns Napoleon had never yet found himself opposed to a nation in arms. In the Peninsula he was confronted by an unfamiliar phenomenon. 'Spain', as Seeley forcibly observed, 'was Spain, but those Italian and German states were not Italy and Germany, but only in Italy and Germany.'<sup>1</sup> From the moment that Napoleon marched into Spain a new passion was aroused in Continental Europe—the passion of nationality. Unlike Neapolitans or Westphalians the Spaniards were not minded to be tossed contemptuously to a kinsman of the new Charlemagne, to become the vassals of France. *Juntas*, national committees, were quickly organized in all parts of

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Stein*, I. 17.

Spain, and Joseph was hardly seated upon the throne when the Emperor learnt to his chagrin that a French army 20,000 strong, under the command of Dupont, had been compelled to capitulate at Baylen (19 July).

From the outset of the attack on the Peninsula Castlereagh had realized that at last the opportunity had come for England, abandoning the disastrous strategy of Pitt, to concentrate her military forces and wage 'la grande guerre' against Napoleon. An Asturian deputation had reached England on June 8, to inform the British Government that a national rising, on a great scale, was already in progress in Spain and to invoke the assistance of Great Britain.

Canning and Castlereagh were anxious to afford it. Any nation which opposes France, declared Canning, 'becomes instantly our essential ally'. Castlereagh's views coincided with Canning's. The nation was behind the Government. *The Times* expressed the prevailing opinion when it insisted (29 June 1808) that the Spanish cause must not be betrayed, but be supported by the whole strength of the British army. Castlereagh had already made his preparations: the army was ready; the transports were ready, and two soldiers of genius were available for the command. Castlereagh was most anxious that it should be entrusted to his friend Sir Arthur Wellesley, and, with the contingency that had now occurred in view, Wellesley had been promoted Lieutenant-General in the preceding April. But he was still junior to Sir Hew Dalrymple, Sir Harry Burrard and Sir John Moore who were also available. All that Castlereagh could effect, therefore, was to send Wellesley off in command of the vanguard which reached Portugal on August 1st. Some months before that, in one of the earliest despatches (30 June 1808) Castlereagh had laid down with admirable lucidity the attitude of the British Government towards the



GENERAL SIR ARTHUR WELLESLEY,  
AFTERWARDS 1ST DUKE OF WELLINGTON, K.G.

*From the Portrait by Goya at the National Portrait Gallery*



Spanish patriots. 'You are authorized', he wrote, 'to give the most distinct assurances to the Spanish and Portuguese people that His Majesty, in sending a force to their assistance, has no other object in view than to afford them the most unqualified and disinterested support; and . . . you will act . . . upon the principle that His Majesty's endeavours are to be directed to aid the people of Spain and Portugal in restoring and maintaining against France the independence and integrity of their respective monarchies. . . . The entire and absolute evacuation of the Peninsula, by the troops of France being . . . the only security for Spanish independence, and the only basis upon which the Spanish nation should be prevailed upon to treat or to lay down their arms.'<sup>1</sup>

Wellesley drove back the French from Rolica on August 17th, and four days later inflicted a crushing defeat upon Junot at Vimiera (21 August 1808). Unfortunately, the fruits of Wellesley's great victory were snatched from him by the inopportune arrival of Sir Harry Burrard who assumed the command and refused to allow Wellesley to move on Torres Vedras and so cut off Junot's retreat on Lisbon. Junot was consequently able to regain Lisbon, though with greatly weakened forces. He thereupon proposed to Sir Hew Dalrymple, by whom Burrard had in turn been superseded, an armistice. The terms proposed to and accepted by Dalrymple were embodied in the famous—or infamous—Convention of Cintra (30 August 1808). The French agreed to evacuate Portugal but were to be transported back to France with all their guns and stores on British ships.

In a private letter to Castlereagh (5 September 1808) Wellesley declared that it was quite impossible for him to continue any longer with the army in the Peninsula

<sup>1</sup> *Wellington Despatches*, IV. 18-19.



and asking to be allowed to return home and resume his duties as Chief Secretary for Ireland, or failing that to remain on the staff in England, or, if that were impracticable, to remain without employment. Sir Arthur was wholly dissatisfied not less with the military conduct of the Commander-in-Chief in Spain than with the personal treatment received at his hands. He concludes his letter: 'I am convinced it is better for him, for the army, and for me that I should go away; and the sooner I go the better.' Leave was given, and Wellesley arrived in England on October 6th.

Meanwhile, a howl of disappointment and indignation had greeted the announcement of the terms of the Convention of Cintra, both in Great Britain and in Spain. Castlereagh was not a whit less indignant than Canning, but held that having been concluded by the responsible officers on the spot the Convention must be ratified. Canning was absent from the Cabinet at which ratification was decided. Whether his absence was deliberate or accidental is uncertain,<sup>1</sup> but he had previously written to Perceval, 'It makes one sick with shame to think of it.' In view of the breach so soon to widen between the two men it is satisfactory to read, in the same letter, his tribute to his colleague: 'Poor Castlereagh, who has been working night and day to get transports to convey our troops to the scene of action, will have to plead (and most truly) that all his exertions (and no man ever made greater) were inadequate to enable him to do all that he wished . . . he is at once to find tonnage for this precious freight [the French troops, guns, etc.] for which I suppose our own expeditions must stand still.'<sup>2</sup>

Castlereagh, though even more disappointed than Canning, was less occupied with lamentations over an

<sup>1</sup> C.C., V. 455.

<sup>2</sup> Walpole: *Perceval*, I. 296.

irrevocable past, and was more concerned to redeem it by 'increased and accelerated exertions' <sup>1</sup> in the immediate future. The Cabinet set up a Court of Enquiry to consider the conduct of the generals in concluding the Convention and decided to send out at once a new expedition to the Peninsula. The Court of Enquiry was opened on November 14; it practically whitewashed all three generals, but none of them were employed in the fresh expedition.

The officer selected by Castlereagh for the command-in-chief was Sir John Moore. Moore was ordered to advance into the heart of Spain and to join forces with the Spanish patriots, and in co-operation with them, expel the French from the Peninsula.

For such a task the forces under his command were, as he clearly recognized, quite inadequate. The Duke of York was of the same opinion, and warned the Government that to employ less than 60,000 on the execution of this task was to send them to certain destruction.

Moore's appointment to the chief command in Spain was dated September 25 1808, and news of his appointment reached him at Lisbon on October 6th. He had under his command 20,000-30,000 men, but was to be reinforced by 10,000 men who, under Sir David Baird, were to join him at Salamanca.

Opposed to him was a French army of 250,000 men under Napoleon's personal command. The Emperor had been freed from all anxiety about the position in Central Europe by the Convention of Erfurt concluded with the Czar Alexander (12 October). He hurried off to Spain, determined by a rapid thrust to crush the resistance of the Spanish patriots. He arrived at Vittoria on November 8; before the end of the month all the Spanish armies were annihilated, and on December

<sup>1</sup> To Perceval, 27 September: *op. cit.*, I. 300.

4 Napoleon reached Madrid and replaced Joseph Buonaparte on the throne.

Moore, with his handful of men, had advanced, in face of immense difficulties, to Salamanca, but then found himself in a most critical situation. Spain, as he wrote to Castlereagh (25 November) was 'without armies, Generals or a Government'. He resolved, therefore, to retreat towards Vigo—a destination afterwards changed to Corunna. Moore's conduct of that operation forms one of the epics of military history. The retreat was, however, calamitous. Except when compelled to turn and face their pursuers the troops lost all sense of discipline, and the horrors of the retreat were indescribable. 'The men', wrote Charles Stewart, then a Brigadier, 'dropped down by whole sections on the wayside and died, some with curses, others with the voice of prayer, in their mouths'.<sup>1</sup> Yet Moore, with indomitable courage and masterly skill, kept his little force in hand, fought now and again a rearguard action with success, and reached Corunna on January 11th. But the transports on which Moore had counted were not there. Save for a few fishing boats the bay was empty. Overtaken at last by the French, Moore was compelled to fight. At every point the enemy were repulsed, but in the moment of victory Moore was killed. On the day after the battle the British force was safely embarked on the transports, whose tardy arrival had permitted Moore to win a splendid if fruitless victory. Moore was left in an honoured grave at Corunna over which Soult chivalrously erected an appropriate monument. The French were, temporarily, masters of the Peninsula.

Moore's conduct of the whole campaign, and more particularly of the retreat to Corunna, has been the subject of controversy from that day to this. 'Once

<sup>1</sup> Londonderry: *Peninsular War*, I. 267.

again', writes Sir John Fortescue, 'Canning was for throwing all blame on the shoulders of the dead Moore; and once again Castlereagh refused to stoop to such meanness and cowardice, taking all responsibility upon himself. Canning behaved abominably. His difference with Castlereagh over this question, of Moore's expedition widened the already wide breach between the two men.'<sup>1</sup>

That Moore was a great soldier is not disputed. He was, indeed, as Sir Charles Napier said, 'a very king of men', and Sir William Napier's noble tribute to him is as just as it is trite. Sir Charles Oman does, indeed, point out that the violent hurry of Moore's retreat was not necessitated by the military situation and contributed greatly to the sufferings of his men. But on the whole Oman sums up in Moore's favour, and provides no provocation for the jibes directed by Sir F. Maurice against an academic critic of military strategy. Moore was evidently wrong in his opinion (as Wellesley subsequently proved) that the Portuguese 'frontier was not defensible against a superior force'; his own Diary proves that he was extraordinarily sensitive and self-conscious, but the worst that Sir Charles Oman says against him as a soldier was that he suffered from 'an excessive sense of responsibility'.<sup>2</sup>

The relations between Castlereagh and Moore—both in their respective spheres pre-eminently great men—have also been the subject of acute controversy, not to say of gross misrepresentation. They demand, therefore, from a biographer of Castlereagh, some further attention.

Moore was a Whig, perhaps even a Radical, and no respecter of persons. Least of all could he tolerate a

<sup>1</sup> *British Statesmen of the Great War*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> *Peninsular War*, I. 601.

politician. Like most soldiers he was impatient of the control which, under parliamentary government, must ultimately vest in the civil power. Canning heartily disliked Moore: Castlereagh, on the contrary, liked Moore, and treated him, by the latter's own confession, with consideration: 'Lord Castlereagh had rather supported me in the Cabinet. He expressed himself kindly respecting all I had done and said he hoped there would soon be an opportunity of employing me advantageously.' So Moore, on his return from Sicily, wrote in his Diary for January 12 1808. But on September 8 1808, when in Portugal, he wrote: 'He [Dalrymple] showed me a despatch from Lord Castlereagh which, as usual, was plausible verbose nonsense. . . . This is a sort of gibberish which men in office use and fancy themselves military men. . . .' Moore was not the only soldier who has formed this opinion of the 'frocks'. He was pre-eminently a 'soldiers' soldier'. 'If not a stone had been raised nor a line written, his work', wrote Sir John Fortescue, 'would still remain with us: for no man, not Cromwell, nor Marlborough, nor Wellington, has set so strong a mark for good upon the British army as John Moore.' Coming from such a source that judgement must be accepted as conclusive as regards Moore's military repute.

It does not, however, dispose of the points at issue between the critics of Castlereagh and Moore respectively. Much has been made in that connection of Moore's famous postscript to his last interview with Castlereagh, and Canning's indignant comment thereon.

After Moore's return from Sweden (July 1808), where his experiences had been unfortunate, Moore was sent for by the Secretary of State for War and instructed to prepare himself to proceed at once to the Peninsula. While accepting the appointment he un-

burdened himself as to the 'unhandsome treatment' he conceived himself to have received from Castlereagh. Though not directly informed he was led to infer that, though like them a Lieutenant-General, he was to be placed under the command of Sir Hew Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, soldiers of much less experience of active service than himself. 'Had I been an ensign', said Moore to the embarrassed Castlereagh, 'it would hardly have been possible to treat me with less ceremony. . . . Why I should be the object of such obloquy I cannot understand, but, my Lord, I have been treated unworthily and in a manner which no part of my conduct could justify.' 'It was evident', adds Moore in his Diary, 'from Lord Castlereagh's manner that he was ashamed of himself, and he never could bring himself to say plainly the situation I was to hold.' The interview came to an abrupt end, and after leaving the room Moore is said to have returned to fire at the minister a parting shot: 'Remember, my Lord, I protest against the expedition and foretell its failure.' The report of this incident, which is not mentioned in Moore's Diary, depends for its authenticity entirely upon a statement which Canning is supposed to have made to his private secretary, Mr. Stapleton: 'When Lord Castlereagh mentioned this circumstance to the Cabinet Mr. Canning', writes Stapleton, 'could not help exclaiming "Good God! and do you really mean to say that you allowed a man entertaining such feelings with regard to the expedition to go and assume the command of it."'<sup>1</sup> Stapleton was writing twenty years after Canning's death, but, even assuming the accuracy of his recollections and of Canning's, there is only a slender basis for the immense superstructure built upon the incident he relates. Moore's words have been constantly quoted as proof of his own

<sup>1</sup> Stapleton: *George Canning and His Times*, pp. 159-60.

despondent temper, and of his unfitness for the task entrusted to him. They have also been used to demonstrate Castlereagh's incapacity for *his* job—his inability or reluctance to employ in high command the best available men.

The editor of Moore's Diary suggests an explanation which, if accepted, would go far to disprove the inferences so inimical to the repute both of Castlereagh and Moore. A collation of Moore's Diary with the Castlereagh Correspondence and with Wellington's Despatches proves that Stapleton's account is, if not entirely imaginary, hopelessly confused. 'Having thus disburdened his mind, he [Moore] instantly withdrew, left the office and proceeded to Portsmouth to take the command of the expedition.'<sup>1</sup> Moore, in fact, went to Portsmouth to hand over to Sir Harry Burrard the command of the Corps he had just brought back from Sweden. It was not until after Wellesley's campaign (August 1808), and the conclusion of the Convention of Cintra, that Moore was, as already noted, appointed to the command of the British forces in Spain. His appointment is dated September 25th 1808. Between his interview with Castlereagh and his appointment to command the expedition described above, there was then an interval of more than two months. Canning's exclamation, therefore, if correctly reported by Stapleton, can have no reference to what happened on July 19th. On the question of Moore's conduct of the retreat on Corunna there may be controversy to the end of time. But even if his repute as a soldier is as high as Fortescue and Sir F. Maurice rate it, Moore unquestionably lacked the diplomatic qualities so conspicuous in Marlborough and Wellington. The situation in the Peninsula called for diplomatic tact hardly less than for military capacity, and could Castlereagh

<sup>1</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 159.

have read Moore's Diary he would have found therein ample justification for his doubts as to Moore's fitness for dealing with an exceedingly delicate diplomatic situation.

Moore's parting words to Castlereagh (if actually uttered) may well have referred, as Sir F. Maurice plausibly argues, to the appointment of Dalrymple and Burrard. Of Canning's hostility to Moore there can unfortunately be no question, but his exclamation (if accurately reported) could only have been uttered at least two months after the interview to which Stapleton referred it.

It is, however, tempting to accept the truth of the story if only as indicating the growing tension between Canning and Castlereagh. The quarrel between the two foremost members of the Portland Ministry was now rapidly coming to a head. But before it actually broke out Castlereagh was able to do a notable service to his country. He secured the command in the Peninsula for Sir Arthur Wellesley.

Through all these anxious years Castlereagh's courage never failed; in his determination to defeat Napoleon he never weakened. Moore's retreat, like the Cintra Convention, served only to stimulate him to greater efforts. Sharing to the full Wellesley's opinion (opposed to Moore's) that Portugal could be, and ought to be, defended, Castlereagh adopted Wellesley's masterly Memorandum on the subject, and obtained from the Cabinet their sanction to the plans he proposed.<sup>1</sup> He also induced his colleagues and the King, though not without difficulty, to commit the execution of the plan to the man who had conceived it.<sup>2</sup> Wellesley landed at Lisbon on April 22 1809, taking with him General Charles Stewart—Castlereagh's brother and the successor to his title—as Adjutant-General, and reinforcements

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VII. 39-41.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, VII. 43-5.



to the amount of 10,000 men. Castlereagh's instructions to Wellesley showed his implicit confidence in the General of his choice. The reorganization of the Portuguese Army and the defence of Portugal was to be his first concern. The time and method of his advance into Spain was left to his own judgement.<sup>1</sup>

Before that advance began Wellesley received an intriguing offer from Soult, or his officers, to throw off their allegiance to Napoleon and co-operate with the English in dethroning his brother. Wellesley transmitted the proposal to Castlereagh, but agreed with him that it should be discouraged. He preferred to trust to his own right arm. Having effected the passage of the Douro on May 14 and cleared the French out of Portugal, Wellesley, after a terrific battle, inflicted a heavy defeat upon the French in the famous battle of Talavera (27-8 July). Wellesley was raised to the peerage as Viscount Wellington, and Stewart was made a K.C.B. and (being on leave in England) received in person the thanks of Parliament. Castlereagh's new army scheme had enabled him to keep Wellesley well supplied with reinforcements, but the British losses at Talavera were very heavy, and though the battle was a brilliant vindication of Wellesley's tactics, it was entirely void of strategical results. Soult thrust himself between Wellesley's army and its base, and only the skill of the Commander-in-Chief enabled him to extricate his army and regain the Portuguese frontier without disaster.

Actual and grave disaster did, indeed, attend British arms in another portion of the far-flung battle line.

Castlereagh was one of the few men—statesmen, soldiers or sailors—who grasped the central truth—never concealed by Napoleon himself—that the supreme object of his career was the conquest of England and

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VII. 47.

## THE 'ORDERS IN COUNCIL'

the destruction of the British Empire. Except in the Peninsula his military power was irresistible. Emperor of the French, virtually King of Italy and Emperor of Germany, his claim to be the new Charlemagne did not lack a substantial basis. Had the conspiracy of Tilsit not been frustrated, had the Danish and Portuguese fleets been allowed to fall into his grip, he might have given to his continental blockade the reality it lacked. Everything, therefore, depended on the maintenance of Great Britain's naval superiority. All this was clear to Castlereagh. 'The more I have had time to reflect on our future prospects in this war, the more impressed I am with a conviction that neither peace nor independence can be the lot of this nation, till we have found the means of making France feel that her new anti-social and anti-commercial system will not avail her against a power that can, for its own preservation, and consequently legitimately, counteract at sea what she lawlessly inflicts and enforces on shore. I wish you would turn over in your mind, whether . . . the right of retaliation may not be exercised by us without reference to these discussions<sup>1</sup> . . . The detail of such an arrangement will require much consideration: the general principle is sufficiently obvious.'<sup>2</sup>

Between January 1807 and April 1809 Great Britain did exercise the 'right of retaliation' against the blockade which Napoleon attempted to establish by the Berlin Decree (November 1806) and the Milan Decrees (November and December 1807). The general effect of the British *Orders* was to forbid trade between any ports in France and the ports of the allies she controlled, to declare in blockade all ports from which the flag of England was excluded, to insist upon the right of

<sup>1</sup> i.e. with the United States who were already irritated by the *Orders in Council* and declared war on Great Britain in 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Castlereagh to Perceval (1 Oct 1807), *C.C.*, VIII. 87-8.

search, and to forbid the sale of ships by a belligerent to a neutral. The difference between Napoleon's Decrees, and the *Orders in Council* was that Great Britain could enforce her *Orders*, Napoleon could not enforce his. All neutrals necessarily suffered from the restrictions imposed upon their trade, more particularly the Americans who, for obvious reasons, have always been anxious to maintain the doctrine of the 'Freedom of the Seas', and whose irritation against England led in 1812 to an American invasion of Canada. The first *Orders in Council* were issued by the Grenville Ministry, the rest of them by the Tory Governments which were in power from April 1807 onwards.

Castlereagh, however, was anxious to deal a more direct, and as he hoped a final, blow at the naval power of France. As long ago as 1797 Pitt had ordered, for the consideration of the Cabinet, the drafting of a Memorandum on the subject of a projected expedition to the island of Walcheren. 'Practice and experience', so the Memorandum ran, 'seem to unite with the actual circumstances of Britain and of its enemy, in pointing out that, as we can no longer divide the armies of France by Continental wars, we ought to attempt the destruction of the armaments in the havens where they are preparing for invasions. . . . The island of Walcheren in Zealand recommends itself for the destination of [the first conjunct expedition] and the armament can be covered in its operations by the North Sea fleet. The situation of this island with regard to the mouths of the Scheldt is such that, in the event of obtaining it, we could completely command the navigation of that river, and render the possession of the other Zealand islands, and the countries bordering on them, of no value, because we could control the former Dutch and Austrian Netherlands.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Memoir by John Bruce (25 December 1797), *ap. C.C.*, VI. 245-6.

## THE WALCHEREN EXPEDITION

Castlereagh fully appreciated the force of this reasoning. Napoleon was equally alive to the importance of the Scheldt: he had made Antwerp his chief naval establishment; he had lately spent 66,000,000 frs. on new docks, and had already assembled there a fleet for the projected attack upon England, and was rapidly constructing more ships of the line. To destroy the forts and the shipping was, therefore, an object of the first importance.

Moreover, the moment for a decisive blow had evidently come. Austria had declared war upon France in April 1809, and though Napoleon had forced the Archduke Charles back upon Vienna, and had himself entered the city on May 13, his position in Vienna during the ensuing months was exceedingly precarious. On May 21-22 he was severely repulsed, with a loss of 27,000 men, in the great battle of Aspern-Essling on the Danube below Vienna. The news of that repulse sent a thrill throughout Europe. Even Frederick William of Prussia, feeble and wavering as ever, was emboldened to declare that after one more such victory he would throw in his lot with Austria. The Duke of Brunswick flung himself upon Saxony and drove Napoleon's vassal king out of Dresden; Westphalia prepared to rise against its King, Jerome Buonaparte; there were popular risings in Hesse and Prussia. All Germany, fired by the example of Spain and the brave peasants of the Tyrol, seemed to be on the brink of a war of liberation. Nothing could have contributed so powerfully to rouse Germany to the pitch of enthusiasm as an English expedition to Northern Europe, and, in particular, the destruction or capture of Napoleon's great arsenal at Antwerp.

Castlereagh's judgement was entirely sound. Unfortunately the execution of his scheme was not equal to the conception of it. Rapidity of execution was

essential to success. There was in fact unpardonable procrastination. Sir David Dundas who, on the resignation forced on the Duke of York by Mrs. Clarke's vengeful and scandalous allegations, had succeeded him as Commander-in-Chief, was summoned to the Cabinet on March 24 1809 and asked if he could furnish 15,000-16,000 troops for an attack on the Isle of Walcheren. As 20,000 men were then under orders for Portugal, Dundas could not comply with the demands of the Cabinet. But the opinion of the Horse Guards was, in fact, entirely opposed to an expedition to the Scheldt. The political reasons, already summarized, seemed to the Cabinet paramount, though it was only after protracted and anxious, if not stormy, deliberations, that the Cabinet finally decided (21 June 1809) to despatch the expedition. The King was at once informed of the decision by Castlereagh, but wrote in reply that he 'could have wished that the information on which the practicability has been finally decided had not been so imperfect'.<sup>1</sup> The King's doubts were justified: the opportunity was already lost before the expedition left England.

The command of a magnificent army of 40,000 men—'incomparably the greatest armament that had ever left the shores of England'<sup>2</sup>—was entrusted to Pitt's elder brother, the Earl of Chatham. The Navy consisted of 39 ships of the line and smaller craft, bringing up the total to 600. The command of the Navy was given to Sir Richard Strachan. 'No such gigantic assembly of vessels had ever been placed under any British admiral.'<sup>3</sup>

The selection of Chatham was sharply criticized. It was said of him by contemporaries that 'he had not sufficient intellect to hunt', and his appointment was attributed to petticoat influence. The appointment

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VI. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Fortescue: *British Army*, VII. 56.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

## THE WALCHEREN EXPEDITION

was, however, approved by Sir David Dundas, and by Canning who knew him well as a Cabinet Minister and had been prepared to serve under him as Prime Minister. Sir John Fortescue praises him highly as an administrator at the Board of Ordnance, and adds that in the Cabinet his 'counsel was sound, independent and weighty to a remarkable degree'. He even contests the views that Chatham was an incapable soldier, while admitting that he was incurably indolent and so consistently unpunctual as to deserve his nickname of 'the late Lord Chatham'.<sup>1</sup>

Even if the expedition had started, as Castlereagh had so ardently desired, two months earlier than it did, it would have demanded for success two conditions: rapidity of movement, and such perfect 'timing' as would ensure the co-ordination of the naval and military operations. With Chatham in command these conditions were incapable of fulfilment. His appointment, therefore, was entirely inexcusable. The popular epigram was no less scathing than accurate:

Lord Chatham with his sword undrawn  
Kept waiting for Sir Richard Strachan;  
Sir Richard eager to be at 'em  
Kept waiting too; for whom? Lord Chatham.<sup>2</sup>

Not until July 28-9 did the great expedition, amid scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm, leave the shores of England. Half the purpose for which it had been projected was already impossible of fulfilment. Three weeks before it sailed Napoleon had redeemed his failure at Aspern by a victory at Wagram (5-6 July).

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, vii. 54 and *Statesmen of the Great War*, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> Of this epigram, commonly attributed to Tom Moore, there are various versions. I quote the version discovered in the *Morning Chronicle* for Feb. 26 1810, by Major Fyers, who assigns the authorship 'undoubtedly' to Joseph Jekyll, a Master in Chancery who frequently contributed to *The Chronicle*.

Wagram was not a rout like Austerlitz but it was sufficiently decisive to enable Napoleon to impose upon Austria the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Vienna (10 October 1809), and to deter Prussia and Northern Germany from a general rising against Napoleon's régime in Germany.

Castlereagh's instructions to Chatham were drafted with his customary directness and lucidity. 'The complete success of the operation would include the capture or destruction of the whole of the enemy's ships either building at Antwerp or afloat in the Scheldt, the entire destruction of their yards and arsenals at Antwerp, Terneuse and Flushing, and the rendering, if possible, the Scheldt no longer navigable for ships of war.' Chatham was accordingly directed to advance on Antwerp, and in any event to hold the island of Walcheren and the port of Flushing, until further instructed.<sup>1</sup> Had these instructions been followed it is agreed by all authorities, French no less than English, that Antwerp must have surrendered and the French fleet been destroyed. The instructions were disobeyed: precious time was wasted on a siege of Flushing, which after a severe bombardment surrendered, and 6,000 of its defenders became prisoners of war (15 August). If, even then, Chatham had advanced, Antwerp must have fallen. But altercations between the naval and military commands caused further delay; the French forces at Antwerp were daily augmented, and to the natural difficulties of navigation in the Scheldt were added by the energy and resource of Admiral Missiessy innumerable obstacles. But the most effective ally of the French was the fever which is endemic in the autumn in the malarial swamps of the island of Walcheren.

Of the 40,000 men who had left England at the end of July 15,000 were by the end of August in hospital,

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VI. 279.

#### CASTLEREAGH'S INSTRUCTIONS

and many had died. On September 2 the Government decided to recall the expedition and by mid-September Chatham, with the poor remnant of his force, was back in England. Among those who remained to hold Walcheren Island the deaths numbered 200-300 a week, and on December 23rd the island was evacuated. £20,000,000 had been spent, and half the splendid force which had set forth with such hopeful enthusiasm, less than six months before, were dead or sick.

The disaster was the most spectacular which befell English arms during the whole Napoleonic wars. It was due partly to the internal intrigues and fatal procrastinations of a divided Cabinet, but still more to the flat disobedience of Lord Chatham to the careful and precise instructions of Lord Castlereagh. Napoleon subsequently explained to O'Meara the strategical details which would have ensured a British victory speedy and decisive. They were identical with the plan prescribed by Castlereagh.

On Castlereagh, however, the brunt of popular indignation fell. Hardly had Lord Chatham returned to England when Lord Castlereagh quitted the War Office, never to return to it. As to the expedition itself it was Wellington's deliberate opinion that though it was 'wretchedly conducted and altogether ill-planned', yet if the fleet and the transports had made straight for Antwerp (as Lord Castlereagh had desired) the expedition might have succeeded and have rendered an incomparable service'. Such was also Napoleon's own view. But whatever share of the blame must fall on Castlereagh his resignation was due to reasons only partially connected with the disaster at Walcheren.



## CHAPTER XI

### CASTLEREAGH AND CANNING—PERCEVAL'S MINISTRY

THE failure of the Walcheren expedition brought to a head the long-smouldering quarrel between the two leading members of the Portland Ministry.

To think of Canning without thinking of Castlereagh is almost as difficult as to recall the memory of Gladstone without calling to mind the personality of his great rival Disraeli. Canning, like Castlereagh, was by birth an Ulsterman, and a Protestant in creed: both men were ardent disciples of Pitt; both, like their master, were Tories of liberal and enlightened views. But in character and in temperament they were entirely opposed, and, though both were exceptionally gifted, their gifts were as diverse as their fortunes and their characters. But for the generosity of an uncle Canning might never have emerged from obscurity. His father, the heir to the family property of Garvagh, Co. Londonderry, sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and died on the first anniversary of his son's birth—April 11 1774. His widow, with little but her beauty to depend upon, went on to the stage, but achieved little success and presently married a strolling player named Reddish. Reddish died in a madhouse, and his widow took as her third husband a respectable but stage-struck tradesman. From these sordid surroundings George Canning was rescued by his uncle Stratford, a wealthy banker in Lombard Street, who sent him to Eton and Oxford.

## QUARREL WITH CANNING

He left Oxford as he left Eton, with many influential friends and a unique reputation, not undeserved, as 'the brilliant man'. Within two years of leaving Oxford Canning was brought into Parliament as member for Newtown, Isle of Wight, as an avowed supporter of Pitt (1793).

Castlereagh, a year older than Canning, had a more placid childhood, but less conspicuous advantages of education. Not, however, until Castlereagh entered the United Parliament (1801) did the paths of the two men cross. Canning had by that time had some five years' experience of official life, in minor posts; Castlereagh had suppressed the rebellion in Ireland and carried the Legislative Union. Castlereagh's advancement in the official hierarchy was, thenceforward, as we have seen, more rapid and more consistent than Canning's. In 1807 the two men became Cabinet colleagues in the Portland Administration.

Their relations, though necessarily close, were never cordial. Sir John Fortescue attributes Canning's 'increased animosity against Castlereagh' to a quarrel between the Foreign Office and the War Office about Sir John Moore's policy in Sicily. 'The War Office, headed by Castlereagh, backed Moore; the Foreign Office, headed by Canning, of course upheld its own representative; and this, I cannot doubt, was the beginning of Canning's marked antipathy to Moore, and of his increased animosity against Castlereagh.'<sup>1</sup> Quite apart from this, however, it would have been miraculous if relations between the two men had been, with their contrasted temperaments, cordial. Canning was always 'the brilliant man'; but both with tongue and pen his wit was too nimble and mordant to be popular. His pen was often dipped in gall and he 'never delivered an important speech without making an enemy for life'.

<sup>1</sup> *British Statesmen*, p. 219.

## CASTLERLAGH

For the Marshals and Snelgroves of Parliament he had as much contempt as Lord Randolph Churchill; nor was he at any pains to conceal it. His lampoons on Addington recoiled, as we have seen, on himself. Addington was respected; Canning was mistrusted, not least in his own Party. Castlereagh's lack of oratorical gifts never impaired his influence in the councils of his own Party, but did offer an opening to the satire of his enemies. Thus Byron (*Don Juan*, Canto ix, 49-50), with characteristic brutality:

O gentle ladies! should you seek to know  
The import of this diplomatic phrase,  
Bid Ireland's Londonderry's Marquess show  
His parts of speech, and in the strange displays  
Of that odd string of words, all in a row  
Which none divine, and everyone obeys,  
Perhaps you may pick up some queer *no* meaning,—  
Of that weak wordy harvest the sole gleanings,  
I think I can explain myself without  
That sad inexplicable beast of prey—  
That Sphinx, whose words would ever be in doubt,  
Did not his deeds unriddle them each day,—  
That monstrous hieroglyphic—that long spout  
Of blood and water—leaden Castlereagh.

Less heavily, more wittily, but with equal brutality, Thomas Moore (*Insurrection of the Papers*):

Last night I toss'd and turn'd in bed,  
But could not sleep—  
—at length I said,  
I'll think of Viscount C-stil-r-gh  
And of his speeches—that's the way.

'Castlereagh', as even Fortescue, so strongly biassed in favour of Castlereagh against Canning, admitted, 'was no man of the tongue or of the pen. Occasionally he would produce a phrase of extreme felicity, but for the

### CASTLEREAGH'S QUALITIES

most part his speech and writings were clumsy, involved, and frequently even incorrect. But Castlereagh was one who made it his first business to ascertain facts, to look them squarely in the face, and to frame his measures to meet them. As a man of business he was admirable, methodical, industrious, conscientious, with a clear head, and a singularly sane judgement. . . . He did what he thought right . . . made no parade and claimed no credit. But his most signal qualities were his courage and his resolution. . . . In truth he was a great gentleman, courteous, honourable and unselfish; and he was above all a man of strong character. Canning was not quite a gentleman, and was above all a man of brilliant talent. He was, therefore, quite incapable of appreciating what was great in Castlereagh; and Castlereagh, being such as he was, could hardly have helped perceiving the littleness in Canning. The two men were by nature antipathetic towards each other, and it is not surprising that they quarrelled. The reputation of Canning is the greater, unjustly as I think. It was Castlereagh and not Canning who tided us over the worst of the war.'<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh, if halting in speech, had a mind which moved indeed more slowly than Canning's but more surely; his judgement carried more weight with his colleagues, and he was pre-eminently straight. Canning inherited his mother's fondness for the footlights, and the histrionic strain in his temperament unquestionably weakened the effect of his speeches, and aroused suspicion in a House which even then had little use for declamation, and now has much less. Canning was, in fine, thought to be something of an 'actor'. 'The orator', said Lord Brougham, 'never seemed to forget himself, and be absorbed in his theme; he was not carried away by his passions, and he carried not his audience along with him. An actor stood before us, a first-rate one, no doubt, but

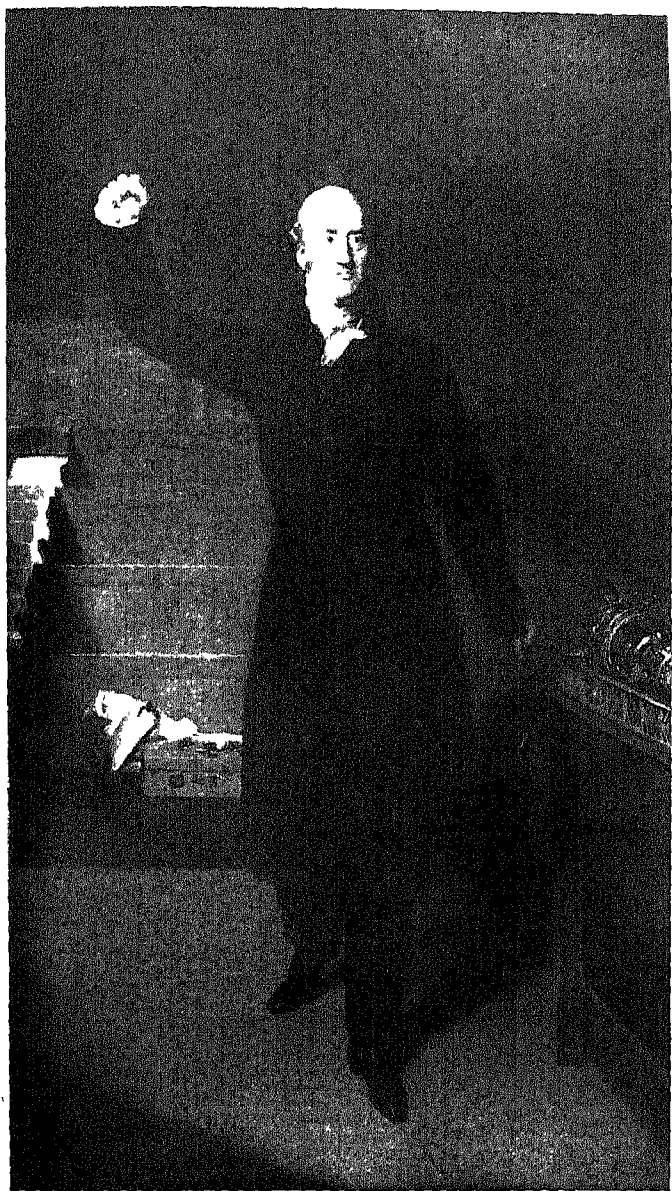
<sup>1</sup> Fortescue: *British Statesmen*, pp. 199-200.

still an actor, and we never forgot that it was a representation we were witnessing, not a real scene.’<sup>1</sup> Brougham’s criticism was characteristically unfair, but there was, evidently, an element of truth in it. So Canning suffered the imputation of insincerity. More damning was the charge that he never ran straight, was faithless to colleagues, and too fond of intrigue. ‘It is Canning’s misfortune’, said John Wilson Croker, ‘that nobody will believe that he can take his tea without a stratagem.’ ‘Canning’, said another critic, ‘can never be a gentleman for more than three hours together.’ However exaggerated such contemporary criticism may be, it suffices to account for Canning’s unpopularity with his colleagues, and for the mistrust with which he was generally regarded.

No such criticisms were ever made against Castlereagh. Stupid he may have been, but he was straightforward. That he was the soul of honour every one agreed.

The more bitterly did he resent the discovery, not made by him until September 1809, that for six months Canning had been working for his removal, if not from the Cabinet, at least from the War Office. As long ago as March 24 Canning wrote to the Prime Minister a somewhat enigmatic letter, lamenting the fact that the Cabinet had been saddled with, and had unwisely accepted, responsibility for the Convention of Cintra and the ‘failure in Spain’, the blame for which ought to have been imputed to the soldiers. He further expressed his opinion that ‘the Government as at present constituted’ was not ‘equal to the great task it has to perform’, and intimated that unless it was reconstituted he must resign’. The Prime Minister forwarded this letter to the King, who shrewdly perceived that it was directed against Castlereagh, and suggested his transference to

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Sketches*, Vol. I, 285. 1



THE RIGHT HON. GEORGE CANNING, M.P.

*From the Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence at the National Portrait Gallery*



some other office. The Duke of Portland assented, but urged that the matter should be postponed until after the prorogation of Parliament, and that, in the meantime, nothing should be said to Castlereagh. After the prorogation it was intended that Castlereagh should be superseded at the War Office by Lord Wellesley.

Canning, informed of this arrangement, was for the moment satisfied, but, towards the end of April, he told Speaker Abbot that the 'Government could not go on and that Castlereagh ought to have resigned'. Of all this intrigue Castlereagh, engrossed with the preparations for the expedition to the Scheldt, had not the faintest suspicion.

Parliament was prorogued on June 21st, and on the next day the Duke of Portland gave Perceval an account of the intrigue. Perceval at once addressed to Canning a dignified but strong protest, giving him the 'greatest credit' for the motives which had induced him to consent to delay, and proceeding: 'But the delay, however reluctantly consented to on your part, has been permitted by you to take place; and the consequence has been that Castlereagh's situation connected with this expedition [to the Scheldt] has been and is one from which he has a right to presume . . . that all his colleagues . . . consented also to its being executed under him.' Canning, in reply, curtly repudiated all responsibility for delay or concealment, and added, rather impertinently, that he had assumed that Castlereagh had heard all about the matter from his uncle, Lord Camden, who had been selected by the Duke of Portland 'expressly as the fittest person to communicate with Lord C.'<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from this and subsequent correspondence that on Canning's part there had been a genuine misunderstanding, and that the chief blame for 'this cursed business' (as Perceval described it) rested on the Duke of

<sup>1</sup> Walpole: *Perceval*, I. 352-3.



Portland. But it is equally clear that Perceval was justified in describing the whole proceeding as 'unjust and dishonourable [to Castlereagh]'. Portland had always been a weak man (in every sense of the word); he was now a dying man; he resigned office in September, and on November 30th he died at Bulstrode.

Not until December 2 was the Ministry reformed under Spencer Perceval as Prime Minister. If anything connected with the English Cabinet system can be described as technical, the country was for six weeks without a ministry. The Duke's formal resignation was only dated October 25th; for the new ministerial appointments he was, therefore, technically responsible. The reconstruction of the Ministry was necessitated not only by the withdrawal of the Prime Minister, but the resignation early in September of Canning, followed shortly afterwards by that of Castlereagh.

Canning's deferred decision to resign compelled Lord Camden to break silence, and to inform his nephew that he was to be called upon to resign the War Office. Lord Camden had, indeed, long been uneasy about the secrecy imposed upon him by the Prime Minister, but the latter had repeatedly refused to release him from his promise. On September 7, however, Castlereagh learnt for the first time that he was to give up the War Office, but was not informed that the matter had been under discussion if not indeed decided for months past. He refused, nevertheless, to accept the Presidency of the Council, which Camden wished to give up to him, or any other office.<sup>1</sup> A few days later he learnt the whole truth from Perceval, and at once sent a challenge to Canning. Canning as promptly accepted it, and the two statesmen met on Wimbledon Common (21 September). Castlereagh lost a button off his coat; Canning

<sup>1</sup> *Diary* of George Rose, M.P. (then Treasurer of the Navy), ii. 421-2.

## THE DUEL

was wounded, severely but not dangerously, in the thigh.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Frederick Maurice gives cautious credence and currency to the story that the immediate cause of the duel was Canning's proposal to 'throw over Moore's reputation'—a dishonourable proposal answered by a pistol shot.<sup>2</sup> For this melodramatic explanation there is no real evidence. Nor is it necessary to seek any explanation beyond that afforded by the events already summarized. That Canning habitually underrated the capacity of Castlereagh is certain; that he believed his removal from the War Office to be demanded in the public interest may be accepted as genuine; that he was determined to succeed the dying Portland as Premier is more than probable. But he cannot be acquitted of gross negligence (if nothing worse) in not making sure that Castlereagh was informed of proposals, which if concealed from the person primarily concerned, could

<sup>1</sup> THE CASTLEREAGH-CANNING DUEL. A series of interesting letters on this subject have recently been published in *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, vol. III (1929-31), pp. 83-95 and 314. But interesting as they are they tend to confirm the view, which has come to be more and more generally held even by Canning's partisans, that, though Canning was entitled to tell the Prime Minister that, unless the latter was prepared to remove Castlereagh from the War Office he (Canning) could not continue at the Foreign Office, he was bound in honour to have made certain that Castlereagh was informed of that ultimatum. Edward Cooke writing to Charles Stewart (Sept. 21 1809) refers to the 'extreme duplicity of Canning's conduct' to 'this atrocious and unexampled system of perfidy and treachery', expressions none too strong in the mouth of Castlereagh's devoted friend. He refers also to Portland's 'imbecillity', while Castlereagh describes his colleagues as 'So shabby a set of friends'. The student should refer to these letters, as well as to the letters written (Sept. 21 and Oct. 3 1809) by Castlereagh to his father and published in Theresa Lady Londonderry's *Robert Stewart*, pp. 35-41.

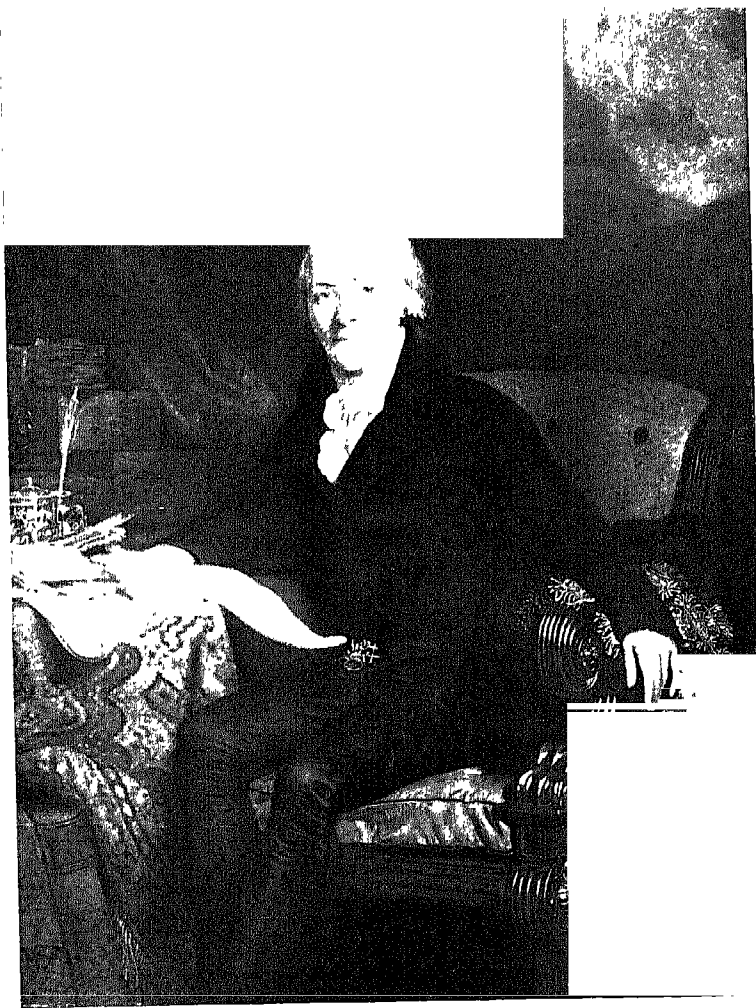
<sup>2</sup> *Moore's Diary*, II. 394.

only be regarded as a dishonourable intrigue against a colleague.

Castlereagh's indignation was entirely natural, and the mode of its expression was consonant with the accepted code. But the results of the quarrel were deplorable. The country was deprived, at a most critical juncture in its affairs, of the services of two of its ablest and most energetic administrators. Nor were the personal aspects of the matter negligible. Within three years Castlereagh was back in high office; to Canning the issue of the quarrel was much more serious. His official career was suddenly interrupted at a most interesting and perhaps critical point. In 1809, the highest office in the State was almost within his grasp; it did not fall to him until he was a dying man (1827), and it was not until after his rival's death in 1822 that he even regained high office. He did, indeed, re-enter the Cabinet in 1816 as President of the Board of Control, but in 1822 he so far despaired of getting into real power at home that he accepted the Governor-Generalship of India. Only Castlereagh's death averted an experiment which could not have been otherwise than interesting. The subsequent narrative will show that if Canning remained out of high office so long, it was due, not to any lack of generosity on his rival's part—that was most conspicuously displayed in 1812—but to his own unyielding temper and his own inordinate ambition.

Only after some delay and much fruitless negotiation was Perceval appointed Prime Minister in succession to the Duke of Portland.

Spencer Perceval has been the object of a perverse fate. Assassinated by a madman before his patient policy had borne full fruit, he was for half a century almost ignored by the Whig historians who, in the Victorian era, dominated the field of political history.



THE RIGHT HON. SPENCER PERCEVAL, M.P.  
*From the Portrait by G. F. Joseph at the National Portrait Gallery*



Not until 1874 did any biography of Perceval appear, and only in 1911 was full justice done to his abilities and character by Sir John Fortescue. Pitt had discerned the merits of the young barrister, and had offered him the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland in 1796. Perceval, who had not then entered Parliament or even thought seriously of doing so, declined Pitt's offer. But he was returned for Northampton that same year, and as early as 1801 Pitt designated him as his successor. He served as a Law Officer under Addington, and in Pitt's second ministry, but not until 1807 did he enter the Cabinet or hold any political office. In that year, however, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer under Portland, and was selected, over the heads of Canning and Castlereagh, to lead the House of Commons. Insignificant in stature and cadaverous in countenance, his appearance suggested Exeter Hall rather than Westminster. He was indeed a staunch evangelical, not less strongly opposed than the King himself to any concession to the Roman Catholics. He was an admirable debater, a sound financier, a statesman of unflinching courage and transparent honesty. As Chancellor of the Exchequer—an office which after 1809 he retained with the Premiership—he not only kept expenditure on the lowest scale compatible with the efficient prosecution of the war, but successfully carried through a scheme for the conversion of the three per cents. into terminable annuities, and in 1811 made bank-notes legal tender. Though less flagrantly ambitious than Canning, he was not unmindful of his own dignity and legitimate claims, and in the re-shuffle necessitated by Portland's resignation was as unwilling to give way to Canning as Canning was unwilling to serve under him. He was, however, genuinely anxious, in the national interest, to broaden the basis of the Administration, and endeavoured to secure the co-operation of the Whig leaders, only to be

## CASTLEREAGH

met by a curt refusal from Lord Grenville and Lord Grey. The Portland Ministry was, therefore, patched up. Lord Wellesley was recalled from Spain to succeed Canning at the Foreign Office, Lord Liverpool took Castlereagh's place as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, and Lord Chatham who, after the Walcheren inquiry, was compelled to resign, was succeeded by Lord Mulgrave as Master-General of the Ordnance.

On all important questions Perceval could fortunately count upon the patriotic and wholehearted support of Lord Castlereagh, in his unaccustomed capacity as a Private Member. When Parliament met in January 1810 the new Ministry carried the Address by 144 to 92 in the Lords and by 263 to 167 in the Commons, and votes of thanks, though not without opposition, to Lord Wellington and the army in the Peninsula. Attention was then called, very properly, to the failure of the Walcheren Expedition, and the House of Commons, by the small majority of 9, resolved to appoint a Committee to inquire into the policy and the conduct of that Expedition. Sir David Dundas and Lord Chatham were among the witnesses examined by the Committee. It came out that Chatham had, without the knowledge of his colleagues in the Cabinet, submitted to the King a Memorandum animadverting on the Navy. His conduct was censured by a considerable majority (221 to 188) and he consequently resigned. On the main question, after a protracted debate—not concluded until March 30th—the House supported the Government by 272 votes against 232.

In the course of the debate Lord Castlereagh made an elaborate defence of his policy. His speech occupied more than three hours in delivery, and the *Hansard* of the day devoted no fewer than fifty-three columns to the report of it.<sup>1</sup> Though somewhat verbose, the speech

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, 26 March 1810 (vol. xvi, pp. 81-134)

was a powerful and effective vindication of the policy of the Walcheren expedition. Its object was, as Castlereagh made clear, partly military, partly political. The military objects were: '(1) The reduction of the isle of Walcheren, with a view to the occupation and eventual destruction of the port and naval arsenal at Flushing. (2) The capture or destruction of the enemy's ships afloat then stationed in the Lower Scheldt . . . and the defences in the upper part of the river; and (3) the destruction of the arsenal at Antwerp of the ships building, and those afloat if they should have succeeded in effecting their retreat.' Politically the expedition was undertaken in order to afford the greatest possible measure of encouragement to the Continental powers, actually or potentially, opposed to Napoleon. For the selection of the Scheldt, as for the *policy* of the whole expedition, the Government, as Castlereagh insisted, were solely responsible; but to say that they ignored or overrode military opinion was untrue. Nor had Castlereagh any difficulty in showing that the selection of the Scheldt was wise, if only because (as the evidence given by Huskisson had proved) there, and not elsewhere, could an expedition be adequately financed out of our own resources. The expenditure involved in it had, however, as Castlereagh maintained, been absurdly exaggerated. It had been put, at a meeting of protest in the City at £15,000,000. Castlereagh had no difficulty in showing that the actual expenditure involved was only about £800,000. Into the execution of the plan Castlereagh entered less fully than into its policy. As far as he was concerned there had been, he contended, no avoidable delay. 'Neither the army itself, nor the means of transporting it, could possibly have been ready earlier.' On the failure of the General and Admiral in command he was generously silent, but he quoted General Brownrigg's weighty opinion that 'there was a fair prospect of success



had the armament arrived early in August at Santvliet'. Deploring, as every one must, the suffering with which the troops were afflicted by sickness, he maintained that the arrangements made by the Government were 'liberal, provident and ample', and that the sick 'experienced every degree of attention and tenderness' possible under the circumstances of a 'calamity so extensive and rapid'. As to his own share in the business he was wholly impenitent.

The close of the speech, it is not surprising to learn, was greeted by loud cries of adjourn, and after a few observations by Ponsonby the House adjourned.

The debate on the Walcheren Expedition gave rise to one of those 'incidents' which almost invariably arouse far more public excitement than matters of much greater intrinsic importance. On going into Committee a Private Member 'spied strangers' and, despite protests from Sir Francis Burdett and others, the inquiry was held in secret. Burdett pursued the matter<sup>1</sup> and was ultimately committed to the Tower in that in 'a libellous and seditious paper' he had violated the rights and privileges of the House. For three days he successfully resisted the execution of the Speaker's warrant, and when finally captured, he became in the Tower a popular idol. Only on the prorogation of Parliament (June 21st) did his imprisonment, after lasting for nearly three months, come automatically to an end. Burdett's protest, which was against the tyrannical misuse of parliamentary privileges, may have been constitutionally sound; but it was ill-timed. Secrecy of debate is a privilege which has never been abandoned, and may be, particularly in war-time, properly asserted.

More important were the constitutional points raised by a recurrence, in the autumn of 1810, of the King's malady, and the necessity of providing, during his

<sup>1</sup> Patterson: *Sir Francis Burdett and His Times* (1931) c. cii.

## THE REGENCY QUESTION

incapacity, for the exercise of the Royal Authority. As in 1788, Parliament became involved in a maze of constitutional conundrums. And the attitude of the two Parties added, as before, to the confusion. Both Parties agreed that the office of Regent should, during the continuance of the King's malady, be vested in the Prince of Wales. But did the Regency belong to him in virtue of his right of succession to the throne; or was it to be conferred upon him by Parliament and with such restrictions as might to Parliament seem good? The Whigs, with an eye to political favours anticipated from a Prince who did not love the Tories, argued in favour of the inherent and unrestricted right of the Prince. The Tories, as in 1788, took the contrary view, and embodied it in resolutions proposed by the Prime Minister in December 1811.

Lord Castlereagh, in a powerful speech, supported the principle of restrictions. Disclaiming any distrust of the competence or discretion of the Prince, he argued that all the precedents, and there were many, were in favour of some sort of restrictions, though in different cases different forms of restriction had been preferred. The full powers of the Crown should not, in his view, be immediately conferred upon the Prince, but the limitations should be restricted to a single year. In any case, however, the Regent should not exercise power *per se*: 'it ought to be marked that he was an individual authorized to represent the King still upon the throne'.<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh's views prevailed, and a Bill embodying them passed both Houses in February 1811, but in each House only by a majority of three. The Prince then took the oaths before the Privy Council, and to the dismay of the Whigs at once announced his intention to retain the Tory Ministers already in office. The Tories, indeed, remained in power not only during the

<sup>1</sup> P.D., cxviii. 522-7.

ten years' Regency, but throughout the whole reign of 'Prinny', as King George IV.

More serious than the Regency question was the financial and economic crisis which led in February 1810 to the appointment of the famous Bullion Committee under the chairmanship of Francis Horner, a young Scottish lawyer, one of the first contributors to the *Edinburgh Review*, and at that time M.P. for St. Ives. Of that Committee Castlereagh was an active member; but to the recommendations of the majority he was strongly opposed, and, as will be seen, it was his closely reasoned and weighty speech which largely secured the rejection of the Report by the House of Commons.

The condition of the currency must ever be a matter of grave concern to statesmen compelled to carry on a foreign war. Quite early in the war (1797) there had occurred a financial crisis which had led to the suspension of cash payments. The basis of Britain's currency since that time had been inconvertible paper. But the Bank of England had not, in those days, any monopoly in the issue of notes. The profits on such issues were, of course, enormous. Consequently, innumerable country Banks were established, some of them on very unstable foundations. More than seven hundred Banks came into existence between 1797 and 1814; more than a third of them stopped payment in the critical years 1814-15. In the earlier years of restriction the Banks exhibited commendable restraint upon the issue of notes, and the rapid development of trade neutralized to a large extent the effects of 'inflation'. But by 1810 the country was faced by an alarming crisis. War expenditure was on an enormous scale; the Continental System combined with the *Orders in Council* to strangle our foreign trade, while Wellington's persistent demands for specie, together with the necessity of paying for imports in gold, were causing a serious drain of gold and silver to the Continent.

Paper was consequently required to carry on internal trade, and by 1810 there were £25,000,000 notes in circulation, the price of gold had risen from £3 17s. 10½d. to £4 12s., the guinea was worth 28s., and the gold value of a £5 note fell to £3 10s.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the situation by which the Horner Committee was faced. The Committee was not agreed either as to the causes of the crisis, or as to the appropriate remedy. The 'orthodox' economists (mostly Whigs) included Horner, Huskisson, Ricardo and Tierney. They ascribed the whole mischief to the over-issue of notes, and recommended a return to gold in two years' time.

Their analysis and recommendations were alike combated by Castlereagh, supported by Vansittart, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer under Liverpool in 1812, and continued to hold that office until 1823. The Report was presented to Parliament shortly before the adjournment in June 1810, but not until May 1811 did the House of Commons consider it. Horner then moved sixteen resolutions embodying the main conclusions and recommendations of the majority. The theoretic resolutions were rejected by 151 votes to 75: the practical recommendation of a return to gold payments within two years by 180 to 45.

Castlereagh's speech was an elaborate and admirably lucid presentation of the case of the bankers and business men as opposed to the theoretical economists. He accepted as sound the doctrine of a gold standard, and frankly admitted that the suspension of gold payments was 'like the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act, or the proclamation of martial law, a surrender for a time of the sound and legitimate regulations of our ordinary system; the object being, by such temporary surrender, to preserve the system itself from ultimate destruction'. Regarding suspension as 'an exceptional measure in-

<sup>1</sup> At the moment of Castlereagh's speech it was £4 5s.

tended to meet an exceptional case', Castlereagh maintained that it had been abundantly justified: 'Instead of ruinously, so far as the public interests are concerned, contracting its issues at every moment of temporary pressure or alarm to prevent itself from being drained of its gold [the Bank], has been enabled on every emergency to support public credit with a steady hand. And thus the productive labour of the country, its true and real wealth, has not only been kept up, but enabled to extend itself; whereby the taxes, how heavy soever, have been paid with facility, the loans raised on moderate terms, and the whole machine provided without betraying a symptom of decline.' The rise in the value of gold, the drain of specie to the Continent, the unfavourable state of the foreign exchanges, must these things, he asked, be necessarily due to an over-issue of notes? The cause of them is to be found not in financial but in commercial causes. Nor, indeed, has it ever been proved that though the note issue has undoubtedly increased rapidly since 1797, it is in excess of the legitimate demand for currency. 'An army is not overfed if its rations are increased in proportion to the number of mouths required to be filled.' The same is true of currency. There has admittedly been a rise of prices, and it is argued that this is inimical to the export trade. But this rise in prices is the reverse of calamitous. On the contrary, 'an abundant circulation, by causing an advance of prices, favours speculation and fosters industry, by making the price of produce keep ahead of the cost of production; a restrained circulation, by lowering prices, causes every mercantile speculation to issue in loss, and discourages reproduction, by causing it to terminate in disaster. It is not paper that has depreciated, but gold, which, owing to the excessive demands of the Continent, has appreciated. How could it be otherwise with such a heavy balance of trade against us? Regrettable it may

be, but inevitable. "Are you going", he asked, "to withdraw your army from the Continent . . . and abandon your allies in order to bring the Exchequer round?" One final argument. The enemy has injured our foreign trade, but the internal position is commercially and financially sound. We have won through. But the Majority Report has given fresh hope to the enemy. The Emperor of the French was on the point of abandoning his Continental System. After reading the Report he resolved to continue it, "for he believed that he had at last struck us in a vulnerable point—that what had annoyed France had ruined England". A recurrence to cash payments is admittedly essential to public credit: the existing system can be justified only by overruling necessity; but when the necessity is over, the restoration of the old system "will not be a work of difficulty and need not be a work of time". In the meantime, "let us preserve that system of Currency which enables us to confine [the enemy's] violence to the Continent, and to deny to him the power of interfering with or shaking the most vital branch of a system under which we flourish as a nation, and through the fruits of which we are enabled to maintain the contest on behalf of the world as well as ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

The controversy between 'inflationists' and 'deflationists' has been not less acute since the World War than it was a century before. Castlereagh's argument has consequently a curiously modern sound: almost identical words were used in and around the year 1925 in the House of Commons by the representatives of 'big business', and by many industrial leaders outside, who were opposed to the policy of 'deflation'.

Castlereagh and Vansittart prevailed, but only for the time. The post-war depression re-opened the currency problem: another bullion Committee presided over by

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xix. 986-1011.

Peel was appointed in 1819, and in 1821 cash payments were resumed. Their resumption did not, however, invalidate the war-time argument advanced by Castlereagh. But the inconsistencies of that argument, or part of it, were painfully revealed by the industrial depression which set in during the latter years of the war and contributed so powerfully to the epidemic of disorder which accompanied the first years of peace. That subject will demand attention in a later chapter.

Another question in which Castlereagh manifested unceasing interest was that of the removal of the remaining Catholic disabilities. That question had never been permitted to slumber either in the Imperial Parliament or in Ireland. In the House of Lords it was regularly raised by Lord Donoughmore, Lord Wellesley and others; in the House of Commons by Grattan and Plunket.

One of the debates, initiated by Grattan, gave Lord Castlereagh the opportunity (23 May 1810) of re-stating his position on that matter. Though debarred, by circumstances familiar to the House, from supporting those claims in the United Parliament, he had always declared himself unequivocally in favour of 'the principle of the measure, coupled with adequate arrangements for the security of the constitution in Church and State'. He had always regarded the matter as one not of right but of expediency, and on that ground had resisted the admission of Roman Catholics to the Irish Parliament. But one of his main reasons for promoting the Legislative Union had, as he truly said, been because in that Union he discerned the only means of satisfying the legitimate claims of the Roman Catholics. He was still, he declared, in favour of concessions to them 'under proper safeguards'. Among such safeguards he laid stress upon the necessity for a closer connection between the State and the Roman Catholic hierarchy. He had no desire to

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infringe upon the complete spiritual independence of the Roman Catholic Church, but he held it to be indispensable to the complete civil enfranchisement of Roman Catholics, that they should enter into closer and more friendly relations with the civil power. In particular he favoured, as he always had favoured, some measure of concurrent endowment for the Catholic clergy. Finally, Lord Castlereagh was at pains, by detailed reference to contemporary documents and correspondence, to repudiate the suggestion that in the negotiations which preceded the Union he had made to the Irish Catholics promises which he had failed to implement, and he concluded by bearing generous testimony to 'the judicious and temperate manner in which Mr. Grattan had always agitated the question'.<sup>1</sup> Not until after at least one adjournment was a vote taken on Grattan's motion. It was rejected (on 1 June) by 213 against 109. A similar motion in the House of Lords was rejected by 154 against 68.

Catholic Emancipation was not the only Irish question to which the Imperial Parliament was compelled to give attention. The state of the Irish finances was very unsatisfactory, and in March 1811 Castlereagh supported the proposal for a systematic inquiry into the whole question.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Lord Castlereagh lost no opportunity of supporting his late colleagues in the prosecution of the war, or of encouraging, by his words in Parliament, the efforts of our gallant soldiers in the field. Both politicians and soldiers sorely needed his support.

When the new Session opened in January 1810 it was generally apprehended that the Perceval Ministry would not survive it, while the military situation was in the last degree depressing. With the exception of Mr. Ryder and Mr. Charles Yorke all Perceval's Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xvii. 191-202.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, xix. 432-3.



colleagues were in the House of Lords and Perceval had to sustain single-handed all the attacks of a powerful Opposition. Lord Wellesley's acceptance of the Foreign Office ought to have added strength to the Ministry in the Lords, but a reputation won as a great pro-Consul is not always sustained in Parliament, nor are ex-Viceroy's apt to be easy colleagues in the Cabinet. Moreover, at the moment the name of Wellesley was not one to conjure with. The year 1809 which had opened with such brilliant promise closed in almost unrelieved gloom. Austria, defeated at Wagram, lost a fourth part of her territory, and was compelled to accept humiliating terms of peace; the British expedition to the Scheldt had failed completely and disastrously; while Lord Wellington's brilliant victories on the Douro and at Talavera had been followed by a retreat into Portugal which left Spain at the mercy of Napoleon.

Clear, at the moment, of all other complications Napoleon determined in 1810 to concentrate his efforts on the Peninsula. By the middle of 1810 there were no fewer than 370,000 French troops in Spain. Small wonder that from all quarters in England there arose a cry that on land Napoleon was irresistible, and that the Continental war should be abandoned.

A vote of thanks to Lord Wellington and his army was moved by Perceval on February 1, 1810, and though strongly opposed was ultimately carried *nem. con.* This result was mainly due to the spirited defence of Lord Wellington and his army made by Castlereagh. The ex-Secretary of State for War explained and defended the instructions he had given to Wellington, and claimed that the victory won at Talavera, far from being 'merely a sterile triumph', had, despite the failure of the Spaniards, 'important and beneficial consequences'. These he analysed in detail and expressed his confidence, shared by Wellington, that the field-works erected at Torres

## CASTLEREAGH DEFENDS WELLINGTON

Vedras 'would offer an impassable barrier to the advance of the French, and, sustained by the British Navy, would enable us to prolong the contest in the Peninsula until the enslaved nations of the Continent should rise and throw off the yoke of their oppressor.'

The hopeful anticipations of Castlereagh were precisely fulfilled.

Wellington's plan was to remain strictly on the defensive, but, by laying waste the open country in front of his lines, to compel the French to retreat and waste their resources on the guerrilla warfare in which alone the Spaniards showed to any advantage. But the capture of the great fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo (11 July) and of Almeida (27 September) by the French, the cowardice of the Spaniards, and the hopeless incompetence of the Portuguese, compelled Wellington to give battle at Busaco (27 September). There he inflicted a heavy defeat upon the French and having done so retired behind his lines at Torres Vedras. Before those lines Masséna was helpless and had to retreat through the devastated country with a loss of 30,000 men. Soult captured Badajoz, the fortress which commanded the southern pass into Portugal, but instead of effecting a junction with the retreating army of Masséna, resumed the blockade of Cadiz.

Reinforced from England, Wellington was ready in 1811 to take the offensive. His colleague, General Graham (afterwards raised to the peerage as Lord Lynedoch in 1814) won a brilliant victory at Barrosa (5 March 1811), after a battle which Fortescue describes as 'one of the bloodiest and one of the most creditable to British troops that is to be found in the history of the army'.<sup>1</sup> But disgusted by the incompetence of the Spaniards Graham resigned his command in Spain and joined Wellington in Portugal. The fruits of Graham's

<sup>1</sup> *British Army*, viii. 63.

victory at Barrosa were thus sacrificed by the failure of the people whom we were hoping to deliver from Napoleon's yoke. Not less brilliant than Graham's, and equally fruitless, was Beresford's victory at Albuera (16 May 1811). Meanwhile, Wellington himself had defeated Masséna at Fuentes de Onoro and had taken Almeida. But brilliant as were the feats of the British army they had done little by the end of 1811 to shake the French hold on the Peninsula. Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, commanding respectively the southern and northern roads to Portugal, were untaken; Cadiz could not shake off its blockaders; Marmont was actually encamped on Portuguese soil.

Nevertheless, the success in the field, though yielding inadequate results, did much to dispel the gloom which in 1810 had hung over England, when a strident demand had been raised for the recall of Wellington and the abandonment of the Continental war. That popular clamour was disregarded was due primarily to Spencer Perceval who never for an instant wavered in his resolution to break the power of Napoleon. And Perceval was consistently and powerfully supported from the back benches by Castlereagh.

In March 1811 Castlereagh spoke cordially in support of the vote of thanks to General Graham,<sup>1</sup> and three months later seconded the vote of thanks to Marshal Beresford.<sup>2</sup> A similar compliment had in the meantime (26 April) been paid to Wellington for his defence of Portugal. But while supporting the Government Castlereagh refused to rejoin it. The situation of the Ministry was evidently precarious. Save for Castlereagh's unofficial support Perceval had to confront single-handed a front Opposition Bench of exceptional ability. Huskisson was a keen critic of ministerial finance; Canning's attitude was then, as always, uncertain.

<sup>1</sup> P.D., xix. 546-7.

<sup>2</sup> P.D., xx. 526-8.

Ministers generally, and Lord Wellesley in particular, were most anxious to get their late colleagues back, but Canning would not come back without Huskisson, Sidmouth would not come back with Canning, Castlereagh was too disgusted by the 'treachery' of his late colleagues to come back on any terms. Perceval and Wellesley made strenuous efforts to shake Castlereagh's resolution, but until 1812 it held.

The situation was further complicated by the relations between Lord Wellesley and the Prince Regent. The restrictions on the powers of the Regent were due to expire in February 1812. During the previous autumn Wellesley had been in more frequent communication with the Prince than with his own colleagues and it was common talk that as soon as the Prince was his own master Perceval would be superseded by Lord Wellesley. Soon after Parliament met (7 January 1812), it was made clear that the old King had become permanently insane and that, consequently, the restrictions imposed on the Regent's powers must be allowed to lapse, and more appropriate provision must be made both for him and for the household of the Queen. Wellesley was dissatisfied with the provisions which the Cabinet proposed, and took the unusual but characteristic course of insisting that his dissent from that decision should be communicated to the Prince. His views on the Catholic question also differed from those of his colleagues; he was apparently annoyed that his opinions carried less weight with the Cabinet than in his opinion they deserved; above all he complained that insufficient support was given to his brother and the British armies in the Peninsula. Consequently, he declined to 'continue any longer the imperfect instrument of an imperfect system'. On January 16, Wellesley tendered his resignation to the Prince Regent; on the same day Perceval moved the financial provisions (the 'Household

Bill') in the House of Commons; on the 18th the restrictions on the Regent's powers expired.

That Wellesley was thoroughly dissatisfied with his position in the Cabinet is certain; that he was disappointed in the hope of displacing, with the Regent's help, Spencer Perceval, is more than probable. It is, however, indisputable that with all his splendid abilities—or perhaps by reason of them—he was not the man to play a useful part in parliamentary government. He subsequently served two terms as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and filled more than one of the Household offices under William IV, but never again, after 1812, did he hold Cabinet office.

On Wellesley's resignation the Regent again endeavoured, through the Duke of York, to persuade Lord Grenville and Lord Grey to join the Government, but encountered a point-blank refusal. Lord Castlereagh, though not anxious to take office, ultimately consented to succeed Lord Wellesley, and he remained at the Foreign Office with ever-increasing personal repute, and with indisputable advantage both to his own country and to the world, until the day of his death.

Motions tantamount to votes of censure on the Government were moved in both Houses. In the Lords the motion was defeated by 165 to 72, in the Commons by 209 to 136. The Government was seemingly assured of a long life; but on May 11 the Prime Minister was shot dead in the Lobby of the House of Commons. The assassin was one Bellingham, a decayed merchant from Liverpool who conceived himself to have a personal grievance against the Government. Within a week Bellingham was tried, condemned and hanged, after defending himself and his act with an ability which seemed to preclude the idea of insanity, but his father died in a madhouse, and his own misfortunes had been sufficient to unbalance an even stronger brain.

On the morrow of Perceval's assassination the Speaker summoned leading members from both sides to consider a suitable provision for Mr. Perceval's widow and his twelve children. To Castlereagh it fell to bring up the Regent's message, but he was 'so much affected that he was obliged to sit down amidst the loud cheers and strong sympathy of the House'. The House of Commons invariably shows at its best on such occasions. It agreed unanimously to the Address and from both sides noble tributes were paid to the abilities, and still more to the character, of the murdered minister. Parties and individuals vied with each other in making the provision for the widow and children as large as possible. Ultimately an annuity of £2,000 was voted to the former, of £1,000 (during his mother's lifetime) to her eldest son, and a grant of £50,000 to the children in common.

About the personal character of Perceval, of his qualities as husband, father, and friend, there could be no two opinions. Sir Samuel Romilly, an intimate friend, though a keen political opponent, wrote of him in his Diary: 'No man could be more generous, more kind, more friendly than he was. No man even in private life had a nicer sense of honour. Never was there I believe a more affectionate husband, or a more tender parent.'<sup>1</sup> Wilberforce disapproved of much of his policy but he wrote: 'Perceval had the sweetest of all possible tempers and was one of the most conscientious men I ever knew . . . the least disposed to give pain to others; the most charitable and truly kind and generous creature I ever knew'.<sup>2</sup> 'A man', said Lord Wellesley, 'of the most irreproachable character, of the most perfect integrity, of the mildest heart, of the most amiable qualities.'<sup>3</sup> Such tributes might be indefinitely multiplied.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, iii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, iv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *P.D.*, xxiii. 170.

Opinion about his qualities and achievements as a statesman was, and is, *naturally less unanimous*. 'The ablest debater in the House, though by no means an eloquent speaker' was the judgement of Speaker Abbot, though the latter by no means shared the general opinion that as a leader of the House he was scarcely inferior to Pitt.<sup>1</sup> Certain, however, it is that with each year of his Premiership Perceval's prestige and authority steadily increased. Three years earlier his appointment had been regarded as a doubtful experiment; to replace him in 1812 seemed wellnigh impossible.

<sup>1</sup> Colchester: *Diaries*, II. 381.

## CHAPTER .XII

### AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE—THE AMERICAN WAR, 1812-1814

WHO was to succeed Spencer Perceval? Lord Liverpool acted temporarily as the convener of his colleagues, but although he is reported by Speaker Abbott as speaking (21 May) of 'his own new situation (as First Lord of the Treasury)', ministers were, in fact, only holding their offices *ad interim*. The Prime Minister is the 'keystone' of the Cabinet arch, his removal by resignation or death destroys the arch, and his late colleagues *ipso facto* lose any corporate capacity which conventionally, though not legally, attaches to a 'Cabinet'.

On May 21st Mr. Stuart Wortley (afterwards Lord Wharncliffe) moved an address to the Regent praying him to take measures for the formation of a 'strong and efficient administration'. Whether, as Wilberforce argued, the motion infringed the prerogative of the Crown, it was inevitably interpreted as a vote of no confidence in the *ad interim* Ministry. Lord Castlereagh admitted that 'Parliament had a right to address the Crown on urgent and important occasions to prevent the execution of measures that were deemed by the House injurious to the welfare of the State'; he agreed that 'at no period of our history was it more necessary that a Government should be formed of the united talent and honour of the nation'; he insisted that he and his colleagues had 'interposed no obstacles'; he declared that he himself was quite ready to resign—indeed had already tendered his resignation—and once more he



vindicated his own position in regard to the Catholic claims. At the same time he contended, very justly, that for the moment 'the whole attention of administration should be bent to the great difficulties in which the country was placed, and, above all, to the conducting the war in the Peninsula on the largest possible scale'.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Stuart Wortley's motion was carried by a majority of four (174 to 170). The Prince Regent promised, in answer to the address, to take the resolution into his 'most serious and immediate consideration'. It coincided, in truth, with his own wishes and intentions; he was still hankering, not improperly, after a 'national' Government, and twice (24 May and 2 June) entrusted the formation of such a Government to Lord Wellesley. Lord Wellesley might have made an excellent Prime Minister with a War-Cabinet of one, assisted by responsible clerks at the head of the administrative departments. But the aristocratic Parliament of 1812 was less amenable to Presidential methods of government than the democratic Parliament of 1914, and Lord Wellesley twice failed to execute the commission entrusted to him by the Regent. Renewed overtures were then made not only to Canning but to Lord Grey and Lord Grenville, but the Whig leaders continued to regard the satisfaction of Catholic claims as more important than the prosecution of the war against Napoleon and the emancipation of the European peoples from his tyrannical yoke. Having failed with an ex-Governor-General of India the Regent approached another statesman destined to win hardly less fame than Lord Wellesley, in the same situation. But though an intimate friend of the Regent and a distinguished soldier, Lord Moira had even less experience of official life in England than Lord Wellesley, and, though himself strongly in favour of Roman

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxiii. 274-9.

## LORD LIVERPOOL

Catholic emancipation, was no more successful in persuading the Whig leaders to join his Government than was Lord Wellesley.

The Whig leaders appear to have demanded as a condition of their adhesion, that the Whigs should have a majority in the Cabinet, and, according to Stapleton, Wellesley conceded the claim—a concession described by Canning as ‘generous, liberal and even rash’. Stapleton adds that Canning subsequently told him that ‘the real, though unavowed cause of the breaking off of these negotiations was that the Regent had himself nominated the First Minister and had not left him to be selected by the Whig Junto.’<sup>1</sup>

Having exhausted all possible alternatives the Regent was compelled to fall back on Lord Liverpool who, on June 8, announced in the House of Lords that he had accepted office as Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Banks Jenkinson (1770–1828) was almost the exact contemporary of Castlereagh and Canning, and with the latter had formed a warm friendship at Christ Church. His reputation, like Perceval’s, suffered much from the virulent prejudice of the Whig historians, and was not enhanced by the three dull tomes of his official biographer.<sup>3</sup> But, in his case, as in those of Perceval and Castlereagh, the Whig judgements have now been revised if not reversed. Pitt pronounced Liverpool’s maiden speech in the House of Commons (which he entered as Lord Hawkesbury) to have been the ablest ever made in the House, and promptly gave him office. He served (with Pitt’s approval) as Foreign Secretary under Addington, and on Pitt’s return to power was transferred to the Home Office. Except during the

<sup>1</sup> *Canning and His Times*, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> For the position taken up by the Whig leaders cf. *Dropmore Papers*, and Buckingham: *Memoirs of the Regency*, I. c. vi–xv.

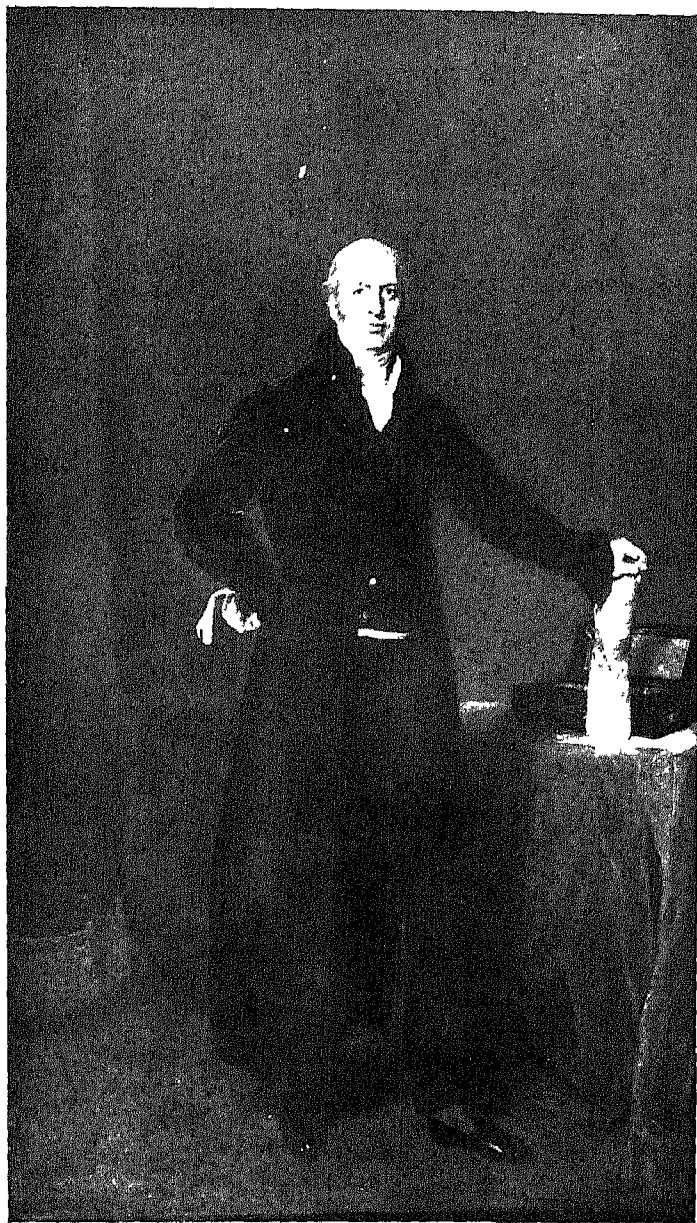
<sup>3</sup> C. D. Yonge: *Life of Lord Liverpool*, 3 vols. (1868).

brief interlude supplied by the 'All the Talents' Ministry, he was continuously in the Cabinet for twenty-six years, from 1801 until his last illness in 1827. Castlereagh and Canning were proud to serve under him and he held the office of Prime Minister, during a period of exceptional strain and difficulty, for a longer consecutive period than any other statesman except Walpole and the younger Pitt. 'Could this', as a recent eulogist pertinently asks, 'have been a small man?'

Of the Cabinet which Liverpool re-formed in June 1812 the most important members were Castlereagh, who retained the Foreign Office, Lord Sidmouth who exchanged the Presidency of the Council for the Home Office, and Lord Eldon, whose tenancy of the Wool-sack was rapidly becoming a freehold. Lord Castlereagh succeeded Perceval in the leadership of the House of Commons where his only Cabinet colleagues were, until 1815, Mr. Nicholas Vansittart, who took Perceval's place as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Mr. C. B. Bathurst. But among his junior colleagues were three future Prime Ministers—Lord Palmerston (Secretary at War), Robert Peel (Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland), and Mr. Frederick ('Prosperity') Robinson who, though Prime Minister (August 1827—January 1828) never, in that capacity, faced Parliament.

Under the circumstances of the hour Lord Liverpool deemed it imperative to assure himself that his Administration had the support of the country as well as of Parliament. Parliament was accordingly dissolved at the end of September. The elections aroused, indeed, so little excitement that only two county constituencies were contested, but they so far strengthened the position of the Government as to give them, it was computed, a gain of sixty seats.

They had need of all the sustenance the Electorate or the Legislature could give them. Of the difficulties



ROBERT BANKS JENKINSON, 2ND EARL OF LIVERPOOL

*From the Portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence at the National Portrait Gallery*



which confronted the Liverpool Government not the least distressing was the increasing tension between Great Britain and the United States of America. That tension issued in June 1812 in a declaration of war by the United States.

There have been few wars in history more deplorable or less justifiable, but so crowded at the moment was the stage of world-politics that some historians have neglected to mention it at all.<sup>1</sup> If, however, the scene of the combat was relatively remote, and the scale small, the issues were by no means negligible, and its effect upon Anglo-American relations was disastrous.

The relations between belligerents and neutrals are bound, in a great war, to be difficult. In the struggle between Great Britain and Napoleon there was, as the Americans ought to have recognized, and as some of them did, no room for neutrality. But, as things were, great losses had been inflicted on the Americans by Napoleon's Continental Blockade and the British *Orders in Council*.

That the Americans might, in consequence, declare war, was a contingency in the mind of Lord Castlereagh as far back as 1807. Lord Castlereagh was in that year in correspondence with Lord Chatham in reference to a possible attack by the United States upon Canada. Were the United States a military power, in the European sense, an attack by them on Canada could hardly, thought Castlereagh, be resisted, and we should probably have to withdraw our forces from Canada and confine ourselves to the protection of Newfoundland. If, however, our 'Navy is alert and proper defensive exertions are made on our part, the Americans', wrote Castlereagh, 'are not likely to attack in force, more especially in view of the fact that the northern States of the Union

<sup>1</sup> Notably and most remarkably Dr. Webster in his *Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-1815*.

. . . are those which are least disposed to a contest with us'. Nevertheless, Castlereagh expressed the view that, 'while relying mainly upon the local Canadian militia to defend themselves, it might be well to reinforce it by a regular corps of 10,000-12,000 men'.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing irritated the Americans so much as the insistence of Great Britain on the 'right of search'. The irritation was wholly intelligible, but equally intelligible was the British contention. Under British law only British action could deprive a British-born subject of his nationality. That hundreds of British nationals had been seduced from their allegiance by American masters and were serving as seamen on American ships was not denied, but, under American law, they had ceased to be British subjects. Hence the dilemma. In 1807 an American ship of war, the *Chesapeake*, was compelled to submit to search by an English frigate and to give up not only certain British deserters, but also some American citizens who had deserted from another American warship. For this act the British Government apologized, and disavowed any claim to search ships of war; but maintained the British doctrine of allegiance, and refused to abandon the right of searching merchant ships. Napoleon's *Decrees* bore upon the American mercantile marine at least as hardly as the British *Orders*. An American ship thus found itself (as an American historian expressed it) 'like a rich and unarmed traveller between two brigands'. In one year alone Napoleon seized 150 ships, and his confiscation of American goods was on an enormous scale.

But the United States had a sentimental affection for the country that had helped them to inflict defeat and humiliation upon England in the War of Secession, while against England there existed, at least in the slave-owning States, much ignorant ill-will. President Jeffer-

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VIII. 104-6.

son was, however, a sincere lover, if not of England, of peace, and attempted (as Goldwin Smith characteristically phrased it) 'to make war without bloodshed'. The *Embargo Act* passed by Congress in 1807 forbade any vessel to sail from America for any foreign port. This Act almost annihilated American commerce, and Jefferson, warned that its enforcement might lead to the secession of the New England States, substituted for it the *Non-Intercourse Act* (1809) which confined the prohibition to England and France. Even this prohibition was, in 1810, withdrawn in favour of France, on Napoleon's announcement that he had rescinded his *Decrees* in favour of America. The announcement was a mere blind; the Americans were, however (perhaps not unwillingly), deluded; and were deservedly punished by the seizure of their goods and of ships thus lured into French ports.

Meanwhile, the *Non-Intercourse Act* and the *Orders in Council* were, between them, inflicting irreparable damage upon British trade. The closing of the North American ports meant a loss to British exporters of £15,000,000 a year, and Brougham, who brought the matter before Parliament on June 16 1812, made an earnest appeal to the Government to give up the *Orders*. 'Let us not', he exclaimed, 'run the risk of adding another to the already formidable league of our enemies and reduce ourselves to the necessity of feeding Canada with troops from Portugal, and of Portugal with bread from England.'

Castlereagh, in response to Brougham's appeal, while vindicating, by a reference to the figures of foreign trade, the original policy of the *Orders*, agreed to suspend them if the American Government would repeal the *Non-Intercourse Act*. As a fact the *Orders* were, on June 23rd, repealed unconditionally, though the Proclamation intimated that if the American Government



did not repeal the *Non-Intercourse Act* the *Orders* would be revived.

The concession came too late. The American Government had on June 18 declared war on Great Britain.

The declaration of war was carried by very small majorities both in the Senate and House of Representatives. So strongly was it opposed by the Northern States, that their secession from the Union was seriously threatened. But the 'war-hawks' of Kentucky were bent on fighting, and there was also, in American politics, a less irresponsible element which welcomed the opportunity for the conquest of Canada. England was, at the moment, deeply involved in the Peninsula, Napoleon was still apparently master of the Continent—he had not yet marched on Moscow—the opportunity for the annexation of Canada might not recur.

The biographer of Castlereagh has no call to follow the story of the war itself. To neither belligerent did it bring any satisfaction. The hands of Great Britain were tied. The American Navy showed itself, on the whole, decidedly superior to the few frigates Great Britain could spare, and taught a sharp lesson to the great Naval Power which, at the outset of the conflict, despised its opponent. A memorable sea-fight between the *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake*, was the only incident redounding to the credit of the British Navy, while General Ross, landing at Chesapeake Bay, defeated the American Militia at Bladensburg, occupied Washington, and burnt the public buildings of the Federal capital, an act of vandalism which left bitter memories and had no military significance. For the rest, an attenuated British army won more credit than the Navy, though a reinforced army suffered, towards the end of the war, a terrible reverse at New Orleans. The sole redeeming feature of a miserable war was the gallantry and loyalty of the Canadians—not least of the French Canadians—

## TREATY OF GHENT

who not merely repulsed the American invasions, but carried the war into the territory of the independent States. The triumphant conclusion of Wellington's campaign in the Peninsula untied the hands of Great Britain, and though the last engagements in America were wholly in favour of the enemy, Great Britain showed magnanimity no less than wisdom in concluding peace with the United States at the end of 1814. The Treaty was signed at Ghent, after some months of negotiation, on Christmas Eve.

The British Commissioners were Admiral Lord Gambier, Dr. William Adams, a distinguished Cambridge jurist, and Mr. Henry Goulburn, M.P., who was afterwards Chancellor of the Exchequer under Wellington and Peel. Lord Castlereagh's instructions to them were conceived in the most conciliatory and liberal spirit. The American Commissioners were to be assured that the desire of the British Government for 'a permanent adjustment of all differences . . . is not abated by the successful termination of the war in Europe'—a double-edged hint. The Americans were at the outset disposed to raise questions as to the legality of the *Orders in Council* and the indemnities claimed for captures under their authority, but in face of the firm attitude of the British negotiators the Americans abandoned their claims. Lord Castlereagh explicitly instructed his representatives to waive all discussion about maritime rights unless the Americans raised the question. In the event it was not raised. If it had been, Lord Gambier and his colleagues were instructed to assure the Americans that the British Government would favourably consider any proposals America might make to check abuses in the future, but must maintain in its integrity 'the undoubted right of the Sovereign of these realms to claim and enforce in war the allegiance and service of his subjects'.

The 'right of search' is, indeed, absolutely essential to an insular power such as Great Britain. 'The right of visiting and searching merchant ships upon the high seas, whatever be the ships, whatever be the cargoes, whatever be the destinations, is the incontestable right of the lawfully commissioned cruisers of a belligerent nation'. Thus did Lord Stowell lay down the doctrine in 1799. British Governments have never abandoned it. The United States, on the contrary, have consistently asserted the doctrine of the 'Freedom of the Seas'. Could an agreement have been reached in 1814 it might have averted acute controversy between the two English-speaking nations a century later; but despite the insistence on the American doctrine in President Wilson's 'Fourteen Points', the question was not raised at the Paris Conference, and the British doctrine still holds the field.

For the rest, Great Britain insisted that the Indians who had been loyal to her in the war should be 'expressly included in the peace': the question of fishing rights—always a thorny one—was satisfactorily adjusted, and the still more difficult question of the boundary line between Canada and the United States—left dangerously vague by the treaty of 1783—was to be referred to two Commissioners, nominated by the two parties, who, in the event of disagreement were to appoint an umpire. The parties could not agree; the King of the Netherlands was appointed umpire; but his award, though accepted by Great Britain, was repudiated by the United States. The sore thus left open was not healed until the conclusion of a treaty in 1846, and even then not until 'war-hawks' had again brought the two countries to the brink of war. The 'forty-ninth parallel' assured British Columbia to Canada, while out of the southern portion of the disputed territory were carved the States of Washington, Idaho and Oregon.

The terms of the Treaty of Ghent were laid before the British Parliament (having been already disclosed by a breach of diplomatic manners at Washington) on March 16th 1815. The treaty was debated in the House of Commons on April 11th and two days later in the House of Lords.

The attack in the Lower House was led by Mr. George Ponsonby, ex-Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and from 1808 to 1817 the official leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. He accused ministers of 'gross misconduct and entire mismanagement'. There had, he asserted, been unpardonable and unintelligible delay in negotiating the treaty, and at the end of those protracted negotiations 'there is', he said, 'no one subject whatever that existed in dispute between the two countries that does not in fact still exist'. The delay, as Ponsonby well knew, was due mainly to the inadequate powers conferred upon the American plenipotentiaries, who were compelled to refer matters constantly to Washington. That the treaty did little more than restore the *status quo ante bellum* was true, but, under the circumstances, inevitable. The war was forced upon Great Britain by America and was not abandoned when the ostensible cause of it—the *Orders in Council* were withdrawn. Mr. Goulburn, one of the Commissioners, replied to Ponsonby, but neither he nor Lord Castlereagh, who replied to the debate as a whole, thought it incumbent on them to deal with the matter at great length. The war was over; peace was concluded; in the conduct of the negotiations, as of the war itself, Great Britain, so Castlereagh contended, had done everything possible to 'facilitate those amicable regulations which it was the wish of Government to establish.' A small House approved the Treaty by 128 votes to 37.<sup>1</sup>

In the House of Lords the debate was even more

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxx. 500-31.

brief and more perfunctory than in the Commons. The only serious criticism either of the conduct of the war or of the negotiations for the peace came from Lord Wellesley, who in order to attack his late colleagues made one of his rare appearances in Parliament. With much that he said about the calamitous character of the war, no one disagreed, but only thirty peers went into the Lobby with him. The Government itself mustered only 83, giving them a majority of 53.

So ended one of the most unfortunate incidents in the history either of Great Britain or the United States.

After a parenthesis, prolonged and deplorable, we return to the conflict in Europe.

At the opening of the year 1812 Napoleon's ascendancy was ostensibly unbroken. In reality his position was already undermined. No one discerned this more clearly than Talleyrand, who resigned his position as Foreign Secretary to the Emperor soon after the Treaty of Tilsit. Talleyrand refused, after that, to be responsible for a policy which he believed to be fraught with danger to Europe, and which was certain to ruin France. He constantly urged upon his master a policy of moderation: but in vain. Napoleon rejected his advice and from Lunéville went on to Pressburg, from Pressburg to Tilsit, and from Tilsit to his doom in the Peninsula, until he was overwhelmed in the snows of Russia, and overcome by that rising spirit of nationalism which he had done more than any man to evoke.

Could Napoleon help himself? 'Je veux conquérir la mer par la puissance de terre.' So said Napoleon in December 1806. But was not his final defeat implicit in Nelson's victory at Trafalgar? After that emphatic assertion of England's superiority at sea there was nothing left to Napoleon but to attempt England's ruin by his Continental System. 'It is the beginning of the end', said Talleyrand, when Napoleon started for

## THE CONTINENTAL SYSTEM

Moscow. The end had begun seven years earlier at Trafalgar. Trafalgar drove Napoleon to adopt the Continental System. Having adopted it he had no option but to enforce it upon all his vassals and allies. From Archangel to the Black Sea continental ports must be impenetrably closed. A puncture at any one point meant the deflation of the whole structure.

The yoke this imposed on Europe became intolerable. England frustrated the application of the system to Denmark and Portugal. Pope Pius VII refused to shut his ports to English ships. The Papal States were immediately annexed to Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy; the Pope was a fugitive from Rome (July 1809). Napoleon could no longer count on the fidelity of his brothers and kinsmen for whom he had provided crowns. Joseph would gladly have abdicated the Spanish throne: Joachim Murat was contemplating the establishment of an independent kingdom in Naples, and perhaps in Italy; Louis Buonaparte resigned the throne of Holland (July 1800); Holland was annexed to France, and a great part of North Germany, including Hamburg, the other Hanse towns, half Jerome Buonaparte's kingdom of Westphalia and the Duchy of Oldenburg soon afterwards shared the fate of Holland.

The Duke of Oldenburg was the brother-in-law of the Czar Alexander. Alexander felt himself insulted by Napoleon's marriage with an Austrian Archduchess (April 1810), but it was the intolerable sufferings of the Russian people, under the restrictions of the Continental System that finally caused the rupture between the two Emperors. Despite the protests of Napoleon, Alexander refused to confiscate in Russian harbours neutral ships, carrying colonial produce. 'I shall have war with Russia on grounds which lie beyond human control, because they are rooted in the case itself.' So Napoleon had observed to Metternich in the autumn of 1810.

He spoke truly; and from that moment bent all his energies on the isolation of Russia.

His efforts in that direction were frustrated by Castlereagh. In 1811 Napoleon was still confident of victory in his contest with England. The industrial dislocation in England confirmed that confidence. To the deputation which congratulated him on the birth of an heir, he said: 'You see how depressed is England to-day. Louis XIV and Louis XV had to make peace with her, and I too should long ago have been obliged to seek it, had I, like them ruled only over old France. But I am the successor not of the Kings of old France but of Charlemagne, my Kingdom is the restored Empire of the Franks. In four years I shall have a fleet. When my squadrons have been three or four years at sea we shall measure swords with England. . . . Before ten years are past I shall have conquered England.' Never for an instant since 1797 had Napoleon lost sight of his main objective—the conquest of England. But in 1812, in his anxiety to isolate Russia, he approached even England with an offer of peace. On April 17 in that year the Duke of Bassano, at Napoleon's direction, formally addressed to Lord Castlereagh proposals for peace. The French minister reminded Castlereagh that the Emperor had repeatedly made similar overtures. 'when the most certain triumphs lay before him', in 1805, in 1808 and in 1810. 'The Sincerity and sublimity' of the present overture were evinced by 'the precise terms of the language' the Duke had been 'directed to use'.<sup>1</sup> Spain, Portugal and Italy were to be evacuated both by France and England; the *present dynasty* in Spain was to be declared independent, Murat to be established on the throne of Naples, and the Bourbons on that of Sicily.

<sup>1</sup> The *Text* of the Duke of Bassano's letter and Castlereagh's reply will be found in *Annual Register* (1812), pp. 420 f.

## NAPOLÉON'S PEACE OFFER

The question of the French overtures for Peace was raised in the House of Commons on July 21 by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Samuel Whitbread. Whitbread was perhaps the ablest and certainly the most pertinacious critic of the Government, and in the course of this Parliament addressed innumerable questions, on every variety of topics, to Lord Castlereagh. Sheridan could not treat Napoleon's offers seriously, describing them as 'perfidious, insidious and insulting'. Wittily and not unfairly he summarized Napoleon's offers thus: 'I am compelled to go to war with Russia, and for the purpose of intimidating that power I will desire the acquiescence of Great Britain in a pretended negotiation for peace. I want 150,000 men out of Spain . . . in order that I may use them against Russia.' The answer of England will be: 'What is your quarrel with Russia?' I reply, 'Because she inexorably refuses to assist me in destroying that maritime strength, and those maritime principles on which alone your existence as a great nation depends. . . . I ask you, England, to lend me your assistance, and when I have achieved my object I will come back to Spain, and shall be very much obliged to you.'

Mr. Whitbread on the contrary believed that the overtures of Napoleon were sincere and ought to have been favourably entertained by this country.

Lord Castlereagh in reply had no difficulty in convincing the House that, without absolutely rejecting the overtures of France, he had put their sincerity to the test by addressing to the French Emperor a simple question. By the 'present dynasty in Spain', did he mean the Buonapartes or the Bourbons? The test was conclusive, and to Castlereagh's question no reply was received from France.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxiii. 1125-61, where the original correspondence between the Duke of Bassano and Castlereagh is printed.



Castlereagh had already adopted a more effectual method than futile negotiations with Napoleon to frustrate the Emperor's attempt to isolate Russia.

Napoleon counted confidently on the help of the Turks against Russia. For several years past Russia and Turkey had been intermittently at war, Russia having persistently refused to evacuate the Danubian Principalities which she had occupied in 1806. Napoleon now (1812) approached the Sultan who might have lent a ready ear to his advances had not Castlereagh opportunely revealed to the Porte the secret articles of the Treaty of Tilsit. Under the agreement then made by the two Imperial conspirators Russia was to get Bessarabia, Moldavia, Wallachia and Bulgaria; France was to have Albania together with Greece and the Greek islands. Alexander pressed for Constantinople, 'the key of my house', and offered Napoleon in compensation Egypt. But on that point Napoleon was adamant. 'Constantinople! Never; that would mean the empire of the world.'<sup>1</sup> Austria also disclosed to the Sultan that she had been offered Bosnia and Serbia.

The Sultan, thrown into consternation by the revelations of Napoleon's duplicity, hastily concluded with Russia the Treaty of Bucharest (May 1812), and in July concluded a treaty with Great Britain. Fifty thousand Russians were promptly transferred from the banks of the Danube to those of the Niemen. Russia's left flank was secured against French attack.

Even more important was Castlereagh's success in securing her right flank. Marshal Bernadotte, the Gascon peasant, who had been chosen by the Swedish Estates as Crown Prince and virtual Regent in 1810, had for some years become increasingly sensible of the hardships inflicted on his new subjects by the Continental System. In November 1810 Napoleon bluntly told

<sup>1</sup> Marriott: *Eastern Question*, p. 166.

## THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW

him that if he was not within fifteen days at war with England, the Russians and Danes should be let loose on Sweden. Bernadotte was thus forced into a war with England which she, magnanimously, did not resent. On the contrary, Great Britain used her good offices in the spring of 1812 to bring about a treaty between Sweden and Russia. The treaty was signed at Abo in April 1812. As the price of assistance to Russia, Sweden obtained a promise of Norway, which at that time belonged to Denmark.

Castlereagh was then represented at Stockholm by an able diplomatist, Sir Edward Thornton (1766-1852), who on July 18 signed, on behalf of Great Britain, a Treaty of Peace with Russia and Sweden at Örebro. With regard to Bernadotte's insistent demand for Norway, Castlereagh was uneasy, and attempted, though not with ultimate success, to suggest alternatives.

Thus Russia was protected, largely by British intervention, on both the outer flanks. But the inner flanks were secured by treaties with Austria and Prussia by Napoleon, who, thus secured, declared war on Russia (April 12 1812). On June 24 he crossed the Niemen at the head of a magnificent army of nearly 700,000 men. With the details of Napoleon's fatal expedition to Moscow the biographer of Castlereagh is not concerned. Suffice it to say that after the battle of Krasnoi the retreat of Napoleon's army became a rout; that the Emperor himself deserted it on December 5th and made his way to Paris, and that on December 13 a miserable remnant of perhaps 100,000 men recrossed the Niemen and crawled back to Leipsic.

The political results of the Moscow disaster have been hotly canvassed and will demand attention later on.

While Napoleon was in Russia Castlereagh's atten-

tion was mainly concentrated on the Peninsula. Next to Nelson's victory at Trafalgar the Peninsular War contributed most to the ultimate overthrow of Napoleon. That the war was carried to its brilliant conclusion was due, of course, to the genius of Wellington and the endurance of the men under his command. That Wellington was originally appointed to the command, and that, despite all the ups and downs of a protracted campaign, Great Britain persisted in her resolution to see it through, was due to the courage, insight and tenacity of Castlereagh. The peculiar circumstances of the war in the Peninsula demanded from the commander of the British armies qualifications as much political as military. Fortunately Wellington was a great statesman as well as a great soldier. Nor was it less fortunate that 'the man on the spot' could confidently count on the support of the Government at home, and in particular of his own friend and compatriot, Lord Castlereagh.

Nevertheless, the situation in the Peninsula at the close of 1811 was not encouraging. Four years of effort had yielded very inadequate results. The key positions of Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo were still in the hands of the French; Cadiz could not shake off its blockaders; Marmont was still encamped on Portuguese soil.

The year 1812 was not, however, far advanced before the tide turned. Wellington made his plans for a fresh campaign with careful elaboration and with every precaution to preserve secrecy. A rapid blow struck at Ciudad Rodrigo led to the capture of that important fortress (19 January). Then, marching south, he stormed and took Badajoz (6 April). The capture of Badajoz, a feat immortalized in Napier's epic, involved heavy losses; but Wellington could now command the two main roads into Spain.

## WELLINGTON IN THE PENINSULA

Wellington decided to advance upon Madrid by the northern road. By the destruction of the pontoons at Almaraz on the Tagus he cut the communications between Soult in the south and Marmont in the north, and then advanced against the latter. He drove Marmont before him beyond Salamanca, but the Frenchman, by a rapid and masterly movement, turned, and put himself between Wellington and his Portuguese base. Wellington was thus compelled to give battle at Salamanca (22 July) where he won the most brilliant victory in the Peninsular War. He took 7,000 prisoners, and the French suffered 14,000 casualties. King Joseph fled from Madrid to Valencia where he ordered Soult, much against his will, to join him. On August 12 Wellington entered Madrid in triumph, but the concentration of the French armies in eastern Spain, combined with Wellington's failure to capture Burgos, compelled him to withdraw the English troops from Madrid and once more, but for the last time, to retreat on Portugal. The retreat cost the allies 9,000 men in killed, wounded and missing; among the half-starved troops there was wild disorder and insubordination. On November 28 1812, Wellington issued a general order complaining of the discipline of the army as worse than 'any army with which I have ever served, or of which I have ever read'. 'Irregularities and outrages of all descriptions', he proceeded, 'were committed with impunity, and losses have been sustained which ought never to have occurred.' These evils he attributed to the 'habitual inattention' of the regimental officers.

This censure was too indiscriminating and was deeply resented. The retreat was accomplished without actual disaster and the campaign of 1812 ended with a balance decided in favour of the British army and its undependable allies. Southern Spain had been

cleared of the French, and the two great fortresses so stoutly defended by them were in British hands.

The campaign of 1813 was less chequered in its progress and even more decisive in results. Soult with nearly 200,000 men, the flower of the French army in the Peninsula, was withdrawn to Germany. Wellington was ready to make the great advance, and drive the French out of Spain. Moving rapidly north, and leaning upon the fleet he threatened the only great military road from Madrid into France. King Joseph, comprehending the design, hastily evacuated Madrid and, with an immense quantity of loot and military stores, made for the frontier. But Wellington moved faster than the French and compelled them to join battle at Vittoria. It was a bloody battle, but it was decisive (26 June). The French were driven, a broken mob, across the frontier, leaving behind them guns and stores, baggage, equipment and a well-filled military chest.

Before advancing into France Wellington blockaded Pampeluna and laid siege to San Sebastian. Soult was hurriedly sent back from Germany and with an army of 100,000 used every device which skill could suggest and courage could employ to stay Wellington's advance. In vain. A series of terrible battles were fought in the Pyrenees, but San Sebastian was stormed and taken, though at heavy cost, on August 31, and the castle surrendered on September 9th. Wellington crossed the Bidassoa on October 7th, but not until Pampeluna had capitulated (31 October) did he fight and defeat the French on the Nivelle (10 November).

Soult, still fighting with desperate courage, was defeated at Orthuz (27 February) and (16 April) was compelled to evacuate Toulouse.

Before the battle of Toulouse was fought Napoleon had ceased to be Emperor of the French. The allied

CASTLEREAGH'S CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY  
armies had entered Paris on March 31st, and on April 2nd the French Senate had formally deposed the Emperor.

The Peninsular War had done its work. Though Napoleon had contemptuously described the Spanish insurrection as 'a war of priests and monks', he was compelled to admit that it acted as 'a running sore'. Unquestionably it drained his vital energies, and contributed in no small measure to the ultimate overthrow of his Empire.

To assess the precise share of the credit that belongs to Castlereagh for the triumphant issue of the Peninsular War is not easy. Primarily, of course, success was due to the soldiers; but it was Castlereagh's Army System which, as we have seen, provided the regular stream of reinforcements for Wellington's army; Castlereagh insisted that, difficult as it was to find it, money must be found; Castlereagh selected their Commander, and as long as Castlereagh was at the War Office he was in constant correspondence with the General-in-Command.

On his accession to the Foreign Office Castlereagh's first act was to write a kind and graceful letter to Sir Henry Wellesley, the British minister at Cadiz, regretting that the country had been deprived of Lord Wellesley's services, but expressing a sincere hope that Sir Henry would, nevertheless, remain at the Spanish Embassy, and assuring him that he would receive all possible support in his difficult task from the Home Government. To the great satisfaction both of Lord Wellington and of Castlereagh Sir Henry remained at Cadiz. To the latter, and no longer to the Commander-in-Chief, the communications of the new Foreign Secretary were necessarily addressed. But those communications make it clear that, greatly as Castlereagh's responsibilities were now extended, his interest in the progress of

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affairs in the Peninsula was unabated. To Castlereagh's quick apprehension of the significance of the Spanish insurrection England's intervention was in the first instance largely due. To him more than to any other statesman the Peninsula owed its deliverance from the yoke imposed on it by Napoleon.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE (1813-14)—THE EUROPEAN COALITION

'PRUDENT panegyrists will confine their attention to his career as Foreign Secretary during the ten closing years of his life. It is upon them that his title to fame must exclusively rest.' So the late Lord Salisbury wrote in 1862.<sup>1</sup> Had Lord Salisbury written 'mainly' instead of 'exclusively' it would be difficult to disagree with him. Whether his judgement will be confirmed by the readers of the preceding chapters of this book it will be for them to say; but the writer of them is constrained to contradict so sweeping a statement coming, moreover, with strange inconsistency from the statesman whose ministry did more than any other to justify Castlereagh's policy in Ireland. It is, however, true that the ten closing years of Castlereagh's life were the most important in his career. From the day when he entered the Foreign Office in February 1812 down to the day of his death in August 1822 Castlereagh was continuously in control of the policy of his own country, and did much to determine the destiny of Europe for half a century to come.

Of Castlereagh's policy during the year 1812, of the war with the United States, of the progress of the war in the Peninsula, and of British negotiations with Turkey and Sweden in order to secure the Russian flanks and thus to isolate Napoleon in his attack on

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, January 1862: reprinted in *Essays Biographical* (Murray, 1905).



Russia, some account has already been given. More and more, in the ensuing years, did the war, though confined to the Continent, become a duel between two men—Castlereagh and Napoleon. That duel was diplomatic as well as military. Could Napoleon retain the allegiance and support of his extended Empire and his client kingdoms? Could a European coalition against Napoleon be re-formed, and if formed would it hold together? The answer to those questions depended mainly upon the financial resources of Great Britain, and upon the diplomatic skill of her Foreign Minister.

It has been the fashion to assume that the retreat from Moscow, and the destruction of the Grand Army, marked the turning point in the military career of Napoleon, that in the Russian disaster his ultimate defeat was implicit. To the historical melodramatist it is tempting to accept that spectacular explanation. But does it suffice? Napoleon himself warned a German diplomatist that 'the lion was not nearly so dead that they might venture to kick him'. What grounds had he for confidence? The most important one was the fidelity, apparently unshaken, of his French subjects: within three months he had raised, by incomparable energy, a new army. Napoleon was still Emperor not of France only but virtually of Germany. Of the constituent states of the Rhenish Confederation only Mecklenburg-Schwerin openly deserted him; the rest, though they might grumble at fresh requisitions for men and money, promptly provided them. Austria firmly refused to throw in her lot with Napoleon's enemies, and Frederick William of Prussia hesitated to do so.

Even the Czar Alexander was undecided whether to seize Prussian Poland, and so punish Prussia for its adhesion to Napoleon, or to pursue the decimated French armies into Germany, put himself at the head of the German patriots, and pose as the liberator of

## GERMAN WAR OF LIBERATION

Europe. Luckily for Germany Baron vom Stein, the greatest of Prussian statesmen but dismissed from office at Napoleon's bidding (December 1808), had in 1812 been invited to Russia to advise Alexander, and was still at the Czar's elbow. General Yorck, who had been appointed to command the Prussian auxiliaries attached in 1812 to a French army-corps, was still in Courland in command of them. On his own responsibility Yorck concluded with the Czar the Convention of Tauróggen (30 December 1812). The Convention stipulated for the neutrality of Yorck's contingent and that Russia should be allowed to occupy the territory between Memel and Königsberg. Frederick William repudiated the Convention and ordered the arrest of Yorck. But the gallant soldier stuck to his post, and with Stein assumed the reins of Government. The hesitating hand of the King was forced; Prussia threw in her lot with Russia; Alexander's army crossed the Niemen on January 13th 1813, and on February 28th the Treaty of Kalisch was concluded. The Czar was to get the bulk of Prussian Poland, but undertook not to lay down arms until Prussia was restored to a position equivalent to that which she had enjoyed before Tilsit.

Prussia declared war on France on March 14th, and a fortnight later a patriotic appeal was issued from Kalisch calling upon all Germans to rise and throw off Napoleon's yoke. The response was ambiguous. Saxony remained staunch to the French alliance, and other States were less than half-hearted in defence of the national cause. Bernadotte, however, lured by the promise of Norway, concluded (April) an alliance with Prussia.

With the military history of the German war of liberation this narrative is not concerned: but Castle-reagh proceeded, as in the case of Spain, on the assumption that any country in arms against Napoleon became

*ipso facto* the friend and ally of Great Britain. In order to cement that friendship Castlereagh sent his half-brother, General Sir Charles Stewart, as his accredited representative to the Headquarters of the Prussian army. General Lord Cathcart, British ambassador at Petersburg, acted in the same capacity at the headquarters of the Czar. It was thanks to the efforts of Sir Charles Stewart, cordially supported by Castlereagh, that the Prussian levies were supplied with the arms, accoutrements, and military stores, without which their patriotic enthusiasm would have run to waste.

Austria still held aloof. With superb skill and patience Metternich awaited the moment when he could extract from a complicated situation the maximum advantage for his own country. His opportunity did not come until June. Meanwhile, the Russians and Prussians had been permitted to occupy Dresden only to be driven out of it at the beginning of May by Napoleon. On May 20-21, Napoleon attacked them at Bautzen, but though the victory was with the French, they could not, for lack of cavalry, follow it up, and the allies retreated in good order into Silesia.

Napoleon then committed what has been generally regarded as the supreme blunder of his career. On June 4 he agreed to a seven weeks armistice. Here at last was Metternich's opportunity. He seized it. He had no wish to deprive his master's son-in-law of his throne; still less to make the Czar the arbiter of Europe, least of all to see the hegemony of Germany transferred from Vienna to Berlin. Accordingly he negotiated simultaneously with Alexander and Napoleon. He met the latter at Dresden (June 26th), and for nine hours the two men wrestled in not unequal combat. 'Thirteen times', so Napoleon told his suite that night, 'I threw down my glove, and thirteen times M. de Metternich picked it up.'

## DEFEAT OF NAPOLEON

Meanwhile, the allies were in conference at Reichenbach, and on June 27th Austria concluded a treaty with them by which she engaged to join the allies if Napoleon did not by August 10th accept the very liberal terms proposed by her. Early in July Metternich heard the news of Wellington's great victory at Vittoria. 'Wellington will yet save us', wrote Stewart in high glee to the Foreign Office. 'This great event', wrote Thornton to Castlereagh (12 July), 'has certainly given Austria courage.'<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh wrote to Cathcart (7 August) to express the hope that the Emperor of Austria was still free 'to insist on an arrangement more consonant to the general interests'. 'The events in Spain', he added, 'not only justify but require his Imperial Majesty, as a mediator, to alter his terms.'<sup>2</sup> Napoleon foolishly neglected to accept, by the appointed day, Metternich's terms; accordingly Austria declared war (12 August) and the second period of the War of Liberation began.

On August 26-7 Napoleon won his last victory over Austria in a great battle fought near Dresden. That victory gravely threatened the success of Metternich's policy, but on the same day Blücher defeated Macdonald in Silesia, and after some weeks of fighting the allies took the offensive and in the first week of October crossed the Elbe. The rival hosts met on the plain of Leipsic, and there, after four days of terrific fighting (16-19 October), the issue was finally decided. Leipsic broke the military power of Napoleon; a fortnight later Napoleon and the remnant of his great army recrossed the Rhine.

In Germany Napoleon's power collapsed like a house of cards; the vassal princes of the Rheinbund hastened (with the exception of the King of Saxony) to make terms with the allies; but among the allies themselves there were divided counsels. Blücher, in command of

<sup>1</sup> C.C., VIII. 416.

<sup>2</sup> C.C., IX. 39.

the Prussian Army, wished to pursue Napoleon across the Rhine. Metternich refused to send an Austrian army into France; he was still bent upon an accommodation with Napoleon, and induced the allied sovereigns, assembled in conference at Frankfort, to offer terms which would have secured the French throne to Napoleon, and left France in possession of the Rhine frontier and Belgium (12 November).

Castlereagh was represented at Frankfort by Lord Aberdeen (1784-1860), a young, inexperienced and somewhat soft-hearted diplomatist who had lately been appointed Envoy-Extraordinary to Vienna, and followed Metternich to Frankfort.

His virtues, which were a trifle too conspicuous for successful diplomacy, his obvious sincerity, and still more obvious simplicity, rendered him an easy prey to the wiles of Metternich. Moreover, Aberdeen absurdly underrated the abilities of the Austrian Chancellor. 'Living with him at all times and in all situations is it possible', writes Aberdeen to Castlereagh, 'I should not know him? If indeed he were the most subtle of mankind, he might certainly impose on one little used to deceive, but this is not his character. He is . . . not a very clever man. He is vain; but he is a good Austrian. He may perhaps like the appearance of negotiation a little too much but he is to be trusted' (12 November 1813).<sup>1</sup> That is not quite the impression derived from Metternich's own account of his diplomatic methods. 'From the day we make peace', he wrote to his Emperor in 1809, 'we must confine our system entirely to manœuvre, evasion, and compliance.' That was consonant with the opinion formed of him both by Napoleon and Castlereagh. 'Il prend l'intrigue pour la politique', said the former. He is, said Castlereagh, after close intercourse with him at Vienna, 'a political harlequin'.

<sup>1</sup> Lady F. Balfour: *Life of Aberdeen*, I. 154-5.

## CASTLEREAGH'S PEACE TERMS

Aberdeen was himself too simple and straightforward to suspect duplicity in others. That Metternich had taken a liking to the attractive and ingenuous young Englishman we can well believe; but that he treated him, on that account, with complete candour (as Aberdeen supposed) is more doubtful.

Castlereagh had given his envoy a free hand. The instructions issued to him on August 6 were in general terms, but he was informed that in the opinion of the British Government France ought to be confined 'at least within the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine, and if the other Great Powers of Europe should feel themselves enabled to contend for such a peace, Great Britain is fully prepared to concur with them in such a line of policy'.<sup>1</sup> But there were, as Castlereagh had repeatedly made clear to his agents at the allied Courts, certain *sine qua non*s (Castlereagh's own plural) on which Great Britain must insist. 'We must preserve our own faith inviolate to Spain, Portugal, Sicily, and Sweden. To the first two, complete independence was to be restored; the Bourbons were to retain Sicily and regain Naples; and Sweden was, according to promise, to have Norway.<sup>2</sup> For ourselves we must retain such colonial conquests as were vital to our naval strategy; but, above all, there must be no discussion of our maritime rights, nor any question of intervention, on the part of a Continental power, in the negotiations between America and ourselves.' 'Great Britain', said Castlereagh with emphasis, 'may be driven out of a Congress, but not out of her maritime rights, and if the Continental Powers know their own interests they will not hazard this.'<sup>3</sup>

Castlereagh's views, set forth in a series of Dispatches,

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8. Castlereagh to Cathcart, 5 July.

<sup>3</sup> Castlereagh to Cathcart, 14 July 1813. *C.C.*, IX. 30, 34, and *British Diplomacy*, pp. 6-15.

between April and November, to Cathcart and Stewart, and communicated to Aberdeen, did not appear to Aberdeen to preclude him from giving a general adherence to the terms suggested by Metternich.

Meanwhile, Castlereagh's attitude was stiffened by the successes of Wellington in the Peninsula, and more immediately by the expulsion of the French from Holland and the restoration of the Prince of Orange (November). Castlereagh's eyes were always firmly fixed on the Low Countries, and on the receipt of this news he promptly dispatched 6,000 men to the Scheldt, under the command of Sir Thomas Graham, who had won great distinction in the Peninsula.

On November 13 Lord Castlereagh sent further and more precise instructions to Lord Aberdeen. There must, he insisted, be no 'suspension of hostilities pending negotiation', and 'we must not encourage our allies to patch up an imperfect arrangement'. After 'such a tide of success' England will 'view with disfavour any peace which does not confine France strictly within her ancient limits' (i.e. presumably the limits of 1790), for Castlereagh proceeds: 'I must particularly entreat you to keep your attention upon Antwerp. The destruction of that arsenal is essential to our safety. To leave it in the hands of France is little short of imposing upon Great Britain the charge of a perpetual war establishment. After all we have done for the Continent in this war, they owe it to us and to themselves to extinguish this fruitful source of danger to both. Press this as a primary object of their operations.'<sup>1</sup> On this point Lord Castlereagh never wavered; to have done so would have been to depart from the most persistently pursued object of English foreign policy; the independence of the

<sup>1</sup> Dated 13 November. C.C., IX. 73-5, but Webster (*British Diplomacy*, p. 111) regards the letter as 'obviously of a rather later date'.

## PEACE DISCUSSIONS AT FRANKFORT

Low Countries has been for at least four centuries the keystone of English diplomacy.<sup>1</sup>

To return to Frankfort. Aberdeen was no match for the professional diplomatists. In company with Metternich and Nesselrode (the trusted representative of the Czar Alexander) he interviewed Napoleon's agent M. de St. Aignan. He reported to Castlereagh (9 November) that he had made it clear to M. St. Aignan that Great Britain was ready to make 'great sacrifices in order to obtain peace for Europe'. 'But I particularly cautioned him', Aberdeen proceeded, 'against supposing that any possible consideration could induce Great Britain to abandon a particle of what she felt to belong to her maritime code, from which in no case could she ever recede. . . .'<sup>2</sup> St. Aignan's *Aide Memoire* appeared to give a much wider meaning to Aberdeen's concession to France, but it mattered the less since Napoleon eventually (2 December) accepted Metternich's proposals, but with so many reservations and exceptions as to make it clear that his only object was to gain time. He had every prospect of gaining it, for there was great friction between the Continental allies and hardly less between the several British representatives. Cathcart, Stewart, and Aberdeen were all at Frankfort, and were in constant correspondence with Castlereagh. Sir George Jackson<sup>3</sup> was there as well, and Sir Robert Wilson was at Weimar, evidently dissatisfied with his own position and firmly persuaded that his presence in Germany was indispensable. 'I am sure', he wrote to Aberdeen, 'that no one but myself can be *au fait* of what is passing, and no other person instantly, if ever, enjoy that confidence which I have from all.' In his *Journal* he adds: 'Nothing is done

<sup>1</sup> See Marriott: *European Commonwealth*, pp. 158-83.

<sup>2</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson had been *chargé d'affaires* in Berlin 1805-6, and returned there as minister, 1814-15.



militarily or politically that I am not told instant; nothing arrives that I do not see; nothing is discussed that I do not hear. There never was an ambassador more valuably aided.' <sup>1</sup> Castlereagh had, in fact, ordered Wilson to join the Austrian Army in Italy; but the Czar, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia all wished, for reasons which are not clear, to keep him in Germany, and Aberdeen was persuaded to write to Castlereagh in support of their wishes. He bore magnanimous testimony to the fact that owing to 'the great respect invariably shown him [Wilson] by the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia he is able to do a thousand things which no one else could do'. Castlereagh very properly resented as an impertinence the interference of the foreign sovereigns, and sardonically observed that 'if Sir Robert Wilson has the confidence of all other Governments he wants that of his own'. Castlereagh was doubtless aware that Wilson, who was a violent partisan of the Whigs, was in correspondence with Lord Grenville and Lord Howick (Grey), and ordered him to proceed forthwith to Italy. That Wilson received important information which was withheld from Aberdeen was, however, true.

Relations between the allied generals were no happier than between the allied diplomatists. Schwarzenberg, in command of the Austrian forces, invaded France by way of Switzerland (21 December). Ten days later Blücher with his Prussians crossed the Rhine at Coblenz and Mainz. It had by then become incontestably apparent that if the Coalition was to be kept in being, and if Napoleon was to be brought to his knees, Great Britain, on whom Austrians, Prussians, Russians and Swedes all relied for funds, must be represented in the Councils of the allies, not by a group of second-rate diplomatists, but

<sup>1</sup> Wilson's *Private Journal*, II. 195—a distinguished soldier who fought in all the great battles of the German War, 1813.



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## CASTLEREAGH'S INSTRUCTIONS

by a statesman who could speak on her behalf with compelling authority; and the word must be spoken at once. Evidently only one man possessed the essential qualifications: strong personality, perfect temper, high official position, and an intimate knowledge of all the questions at issue.

There was, then, nothing for it but that Lord Castlereagh, despite his preoccupation at the Foreign Office and in the House of Commons, should go out as British plenipotentiary at the headquarters of the allied sovereigns. How critical the situation was deemed to be is demonstrated by the fact that the Cabinet met on December 24th, on Christmas Day itself, and again on Sunday, the 26th. It met in order to give a final revision to the instructions drafted by Castlereagh himself, which were to guide the British plenipotentiary in the unprecedentedly important mission he was about to undertake. There were present at those historic meetings, in addition to the Prime Minister and Lord Castlereagh, Lord Chancellor Eldon, the Earl of Harrowby (formerly Mr. Ryder, and now Lord President of the Council), the Earl of Westmorland (Lord Privy Seal), Viscount Sidmouth (Home Secretary), Earl Bathurst (Secretary of State for War and the Colonies), Viscount Melville (First Lord of the Admiralty),<sup>1</sup> Mr. Vansittart (Chancellor of the Exchequer), the Earl of Buckinghamshire (President of the Board of Control), and the Earl of Mulgrave (Master-General of the Ordnance). On the 26th the Cabinet sat for three hours and a half and did not adjourn until half-past six. The original document, endorsed 'most secret and confidential' and scored with pencil corrections and interlineations, is still in the Foreign Office archives. It is entirely in Castlereagh's handwriting and is signed by the Prince Regent.<sup>1</sup> Lord

<sup>1</sup> The existence of this Document was first revealed, as far as I know, in an article in the *Morning Post* for December 26 1913.

Castlereagh was instructed to state the general view of the British Cabinet in these terms:

Lord Castlereagh was instructed, in the first instance, to establish 'a clear and definite understanding with the allies not only on all matters of common interest' but also upon all the points likely to be discussed with the enemy, so that the allies could present a united front. The matters on which Castlereagh and the Cabinet were most anxious were the future of the Netherlands, and the disposal of the colonies of France and Holland, all of which were at the moment in our hands. The sacrifice of conquests which Great Britain was 'disposed to make for the general interest . . . must in a great measure be governed by the nature and conditions with respect to the Continent which the Allied Powers may be enabled to obtain from the enemy. 'If the Maritime Power of France shall be restricted within due bounds by the effectual establishment of Holland, the Peninsula, and Italy in security and independence, Great Britain, consistent with her own security, may then be inclined to apply the greater portion of her conquests to promote the general interests. If, on the contrary, the arrangements should be defective on any of these points, Great Britain must preserve a proportionate share of these conquests to render her secure against France. If called on for a more detailed explanation he may state that the objects *sine qua non* upon which Great Britain can venture to divest herself of her conquests in any material degree are: (1) the absolute exclusion of France from any Naval establishment on the Scheldt, and especially at Antwerp; and (2) the security of Holland

It also formed the subject of an article by G. W. T. Omond in *The Nineteenth Century and After* for March 1918. It is printed partly in *ipsisimis verbis* and partly in abstract *ap. British Diplomacy*, pp. 123-8. Two pages of it was here reproduced with Castlereagh's own corrections in facsimile from the original at the Record Office.

## THE CONQUERED COLONIES

being adequately provided for, under the House of Orange, by a barrier, which shall at least include Juliers and Antwerp, as well as Maastricht, with a suitable arrondissement of territory in addition to Holland as it stood in 1792, it being understood that Wesel shall also be in the hands of the Allied Powers.'

If this arrangement as to Holland was carried out, Great Britain would restore the Dutch Colonies. But 'the Cape of Good Hope is excepted, as a position connected with the security of our Empire in the East, but in lieu of this colony Great Britain would appropriate £2,000,000, to be applied towards the improvement of the Dutch barrier'. Malta and Heligoland must also remain British; 'Mauritius is retained as being when in the hands of an enemy a most injurious naval station to our Indian commerce, whilst it is of little comparative value to France'. For the same reason the Isle of Bourbon must be retained. Guadaloupe, though a British prize, was, in accordance with promise, to be handed over to Bernadotte.

As to the Austrian Netherlands (Belgium), if Austria wanted them for the Archduke Charles, he must have them; if not, Castlereagh would wish to carry out Pitt's favourite project and unite them to Holland, and the enlarged Holland might be brought into closer relations with England by a marriage between the Prince of Orange and the Princess Charlotte, heiress presumptive to the English Crown. But that was a delicate matter which might, with the assent of the Prince of Orange, be 'confidentially opened to the Sovereigns at Headquarters'. As regards the war still going on between Great Britain and the United States, we could not accept mediation or permit intervention, but 'Great Britain was to declare her readiness, should a general peace be signed, to sign a separate peace with the United States of America on the *status quo ante bellum*, without involving in such



secretaries and stenographers, such as Castlereagh never dreamt of.

To compare the actual diplomatic achievements of the two statesmen is not relevant to the present narrative, but the comparison of activities may at least serve to indicate the amazing industry and endurance of Castlereagh, and may perhaps account, in some measure, for his sudden breakdown in 1822, and his tragic end.

Before proceeding to chronicle Castlereagh's doings on the Continent it will be convenient to give some account of his work as Leader of the House of Commons during the period between the death of Spencer Perceval and the famous Cabinets of December 1813.

Of Cabinet colleagues in the House of Commons he had none except C. B. Bathurst and Nicholas Vansittart (afterwards Lord Bexley)<sup>1</sup> who, though devoid of any special qualifications, held office as Chancellor of the Exchequer for twelve years. Vansittart was quite ineffective in debate; he rarely intervened in it, and gave Castlereagh very little assistance in the conduct of Government business. Still less did Castlereagh get it from two junior ministers, destined to become great ornaments of the House of Commons: Lord Palmerston, who was Secretary for War, and the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Sir Robert Peel. Both these young ministers were absorbed in the work of their respective Departments, and the few speeches they made in the House were almost exclusively devoted to their immediate responsibilities. Palmerston had to defend the Army Estimates; Peel made a spirited defence of the principle of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland (March 1813), and introduced (July 1814) a Bill for strengthening the administration of the law. From neither of these clever young men did Castlereagh look

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wellesley Pole was admitted to the Cabinet in 1815 and Mr. F. J. Robinson in 1818.

## THE OPPOSITION

for or receive any support in general debates. Practically the whole burden of defending the policy of the Government accordingly fell on his shoulders.

Nor was that burden light. The Opposition, though lacking coherence, could command a remarkable array of individual talent. Lord Howick had succeeded his father as Earl Grey in November 1807, and had gone to the House of Lords, to the dismay of his Party and the great detriment of his own career. Another loss suffered by the Whig Opposition was that of Lord Henry Petty, who in 1809 succeeded his brother as Marquis of Lansdowne. Of the parliamentary abilities both of Grey and Lansdowne the Duke of Wellington had the highest opinion, but, as he said to Creevey, 'they are lost by being in the Lords. Nobody cares a damn about the House of Lords. The House of Commons is everything in England.'<sup>1</sup>

Grey's gifts of oratory and leadership were not over-rated by contemporaries, but his weakness as a statesman of the war period was that he was a hopeless defeatist. He had great sympathy with the Spanish patriots, but thought them doomed to 'certain and ultimate destruction'. He would have made peace with Napoleon in 1813 and again in the spring of 1814, and even went so far as to hope for a 'moderate check to the allies, as the best means of obtaining it.' After Napoleon's escape from Elba he protested against a war 'undertaken on the principle of personally proscribing the present ruler of France'.

In this matter he was out of harmony with many of his own Party; but there were, indeed, few questions, except Catholic Emancipation, on which the Opposition was united.

George Ponsonby was chosen as their leader, partly because he divided them least, partly, as Lord Holland

<sup>1</sup> *Creevey Papers*, I. 287.

cynically suggests, because each of the rival candidates for that position had 'a secret persuasion that his own abilities would be more conspicuous under a nominal than a real leader of the Party. Mr. Ponsonby', he adds, 'was consequently brought into Parliament at the beginning of the session for the purpose of assuming an ascendancy over a large intelligent and independent body of gentlemen with scarcely twenty of whom he was personally acquainted. A preposterous scheme.'<sup>1</sup>

Of rivals for the leadership there were plenty. Sheridan's abilities were incontestable, and when in 1807 he succeeded Fox as Member for Westminster, his friends were sanguine that he would succeed also to the vacant leadership in the House of Commons. But Sheridan's qualities were not those of a parliamentary leader: besides, he was straitened in means and too often 'in his cups'.

Henry Brougham, though he had done yeoman service for the Whigs by his pen, was not brought into the House of Commons until 1810. He quickly made a parliamentary reputation, but failed to secure election in 1812 and did not return to the House until he was brought in by Lord Darlington for Winchelsea in July 1815. Brougham was exceedingly disgusted at the failure of the Whig magnates to find him a seat, and declared that he had been 'thrown overboard to lighten the ship'. Whatever the reason he never attained to the leadership of his Party in the House of Commons, though from 1815 until his appointment as Lord Chancellor in 1830 he was incomparably the ablest, as well as the most prominent, member on the Opposition benches.

Sir Samuel Romilly was twenty years older than Brougham; he had been Solicitor-General under Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, II. 238. Lord Holland was in error. Ponsonby had entered the Imperial Parliament in 1801, and was continuously a member until his death (1817).

Grenville (1806-7), and was not only a great lawyer, but a man of the highest personal character. He was a Member of the House of Commons continuously for the last twelve years of his life (1806-18), but he never penetrated to the inner circle of the Whig oligarchy and went but little into general society. He sought, throughout life, to promote the good of his fellow-men, and though recognized as a real statesman and a great lawyer, his fame was higher, perhaps deservedly, among the public at large than in the Senate or at the Bar.

George Tierney, like Romilly, whose contemporary he was (1761-1830), was not by birth a member of the ruling class. He belonged to the commercial aristocracy from which subsequently came such statesmen as Peel, Gladstone and Chamberlain. Educated, however, at Eton and Peterhouse, and endowed with ample means, he started life with much better chances than Romilly. Between 1788, when he was first returned to Parliament, and 1830 when he died, as member for Knaresborough, Tierney represented no fewer than six constituencies in succession. On his contests and petitions he expended a fortune. His persistence was rewarded with a minor office under Addington, and Pitt offered him the Chief Secretaryship of Ireland, but he was not prepared to give Pitt the unconditional support which that statesman demanded of his colleagues, and declined the offer. He took office under Grenville as President of the Board of Control in 1806, and on Fox's death was regarded as his obvious successor in the leadership of the Party in the House of Commons. But he had offended a powerful section of the Party by refusing to secede from the House in 1798 and he never won the complete confidence of Grenville. Consequently Howick was preferred to him as leader in 1807, and Ponsonby in 1808. Nine years later, on Ponsonby's death, he at last attained the

leadership, but after 1821 refused to lead a Party hopelessly divided on the 'Queen's business'.

Cleverer than Tierney, as ardent as Romilly, Samuel Whitbread was probably the ablest of the candidates for the leadership when it fell to Ponsonby. But Whitbread, though at Eton with Grey, an undergraduate at Christ Church and a graduate of Cambridge, was tarred like Tierney with the commercial brush. As the brother-in-law of Grey, he was, however, admitted, on sufferance, to the charmed circle of Whig leaders, and might have attained to the leadership of the Party but for his atrocious manners and uncompromising temper. He had entered the House as member for Bedford in 1790 and quickly won recognition as a first rate debater, an ardent reformer and the close ally of Fox. He was selected by his Party to lead the attack on Lord Melville, but was unaccountably excluded from the Ministry of 'All the Talents'.

His exclusion is perhaps explained by two extracts from the letters of Lord to Lady Grey in January and February 1808: 'Whitbread came yesterday and dined with us at Lord Grenville's. He began upon the subject of peace in so hot, and I must say, wrong-headed a manner that the impression produced must have been most unfavourable to him. Old Grenville seemed dumb-founded and hardly spoke a word. You may guess I was on thorns, as the vehemence of his manner was more particularly applied to me. . . . It is Whitbread's *manner* rather than *opinions* that are to be complained of. 'Whitbread's manner, of which I find the complaints universal, has offended Tierney very much, and Tierney, on his part, is very wrong-headed. Whitbread says Tierney wants victory over George Ponsonby, and objects, therefore, to everything that is not proposed by himself. Tierney complains that Whitbread is almost intolerable from the irritation occasioned by disappoint-

ment at not being the avowed leader. 'Though I have the character of a hot, intemperate fellow, I begin to think I am the most reasonable person among them.'<sup>1</sup>

Lord Holland also refers to the altercation at Lord Grenville's dinner table, and goes so far as to say that the 'uneasy footing' on which the brothers-in-law lived was not only a 'source of vexation to both, but perhaps was ultimately fatal to the peace, the fortune and even the life of Mr. Whitbread'. 'Certainly', adds Lord Holland, 'it had a very pernicious effect on the Party to which they belonged.'<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether at any period of its history the Whig Party had, in Opposition, commanded such a galaxy of talent, and it was with such men that Castlereagh, while deeply absorbed in the exacting business of the Foreign Office, had to contend, virtually single-handed, in the House of Commons.

To Whitbread's unsurpassed pertinacity in interrogation reference has already been made, and a perusal of many thousands of columns of Parliamentary Reports enforces the conclusion that the debates during these years resolved themselves into a duel between Whitbread and Castlereagh. Nor does it appear that, contrary to received opinion, the combatants were unequally matched. Official reporters have always been kind to speakers in the House of Commons. Many unfinished sentences have, thanks to them, been completed; many confused arguments have been clarified; but, allowing for all this, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Castlereagh's capacity as a debater has been greatly underrated.

Take, for example, Castlereagh's many speeches on the Catholic claims—a question which Grattan and Sheridan,

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan: *Grey*, pp. 165–6.

<sup>2</sup> *Memoirs*, II. 240. Whitbread, like Castlereagh and Romilly, committed suicide (1815).

Canning, Plunket and Whitbread forced, session after session, upon the attention of the House. Castlereagh was never ashamed to recall his own record in that matter. He had hoped, and he had encouraged the Irish Catholics to hope, that the Act of Union would bring about a final solution of the question. His hopes, like theirs had been disappointed; his own principles had never varied; but while, on the principle he differed from many of the colleagues with whom he had been associated in successive Tory Ministries, he concurred in their opinion that the time was not opportune for legislation. That was, in substance, the reply which and over and over again, he was constrained to make.<sup>1</sup>

Another good example of Castlereagh's adroitness in debate may be found in his reply (27 February 1812) to Whitbread's attack upon him for joining the Perceval Ministry on Wellesley's resignation in January 1812. The Whigs could never conceal their chagrin that the Prince Regent had not taken that and other opportunities of dismissing the Tories. But the real question at issue, as Castlereagh forcibly maintained, was whether the Prince Regent should, under Whig coercion, be compelled 'to change his Government for the purpose of enabling the Government to advise His Royal Highness (contrary to his own convictions, as well as to the undeviating resolution of the King) to repeal all the laws of restriction upon the Catholics'.<sup>2</sup>

Early in the same Session (1812) the Opposition raised one of those questions involving not only public policy but personal interests, in which the House of Commons, being a very human assembly, has always delighted. A certain Colonel M'Mahon, commonly referred to in contemporary literature as 'Sheridan's friend', had lately received from the Prince Regent the lucrative office of Paymaster of Widows' Pensions.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., *P.D.*, xxi. 635-41.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, xxi. 1002.

## COLONEL M'MAHON

Colonel M'Mahon was a Member of Parliament who, according to his own statement in the House had for twenty years (1775-96) been an officer in the army, and had seen much active service in the American War. Invalided out of the army in 1796 he had been appointed by the Prince of Wales as his Private Secretary and had served him in that capacity ever since. As a reward for his services, the value of which no one disputed, Colonel M'Mahon had received the afore-mentioned office.

On January 9 1812, on the motion that the House should go into Committee of Supply, Mr. Thomas Creevey, an ardent Whig, raised the question of sinecure offices and places, especially those which had recently been bestowed upon members of the House of Commons. Creevey declared, as is indeed evident from his famous *Papers*, that he was well acquainted with Colonel M'Mahon and that he 'sincerely believed that a more honest and faithful servant never lived in the court of any prince whatever'. M'Mahon unquestionably deserved anything the Prince could give him, but whoever advised the conferment of a perfect sinecure upon Colonel M'Mahon had, so Creevey argued, done gross injustice to the Colonel himself, and 'had advised the Prince Regent to commit a great outrage upon the House of Commons'. "Twenty-nine years ago the Commissioners of Public Accounts had recommended the abolition of the office as a sinecure, and their recommendation had since been confirmed by the Commissioners of Military Inquiry.'

Mr. Perceval, in reply, pointed out that the Prince Regent so far from desiring to do anything derogatory to Parliament had made it clear to Colonel M'Mahon that his appointment would be subject to the approval of Parliament. So little interest was, however, manifested in the matter that only 65 persons took part



## THE KING'S PRIVATE SECRETARY

April 14. They were evidently right in arguing that the office was a 'new one' and that Parliament was entitled to express an opinion 'whether it was fitting or not that such an office should exist'. Not until King George III was afflicted with blindness had any English Sovereign had a Private Secretary. And the reason was obvious. 'The Home Secretary was the King's Private Secretary.' To interpose a 'third person' between the King and his confidential advisers was, it was argued, unconstitutional. Nor was it proper that Parliament should be called upon to pay the salary, £2,000 a year, attached to this new office.

The argument was one of real substance, and it fell to Castlereagh, on behalf of the Government, to reply to it. He frankly and fully admitted that it was 'the duty of the Sovereign to take advice from the Ministers of the Crown' and for that advice ministers were solely responsible. If M'Mahon's appointment infringed in the least degree upon that exclusive responsibility the ministers would certainly have resented and resisted it. But Castlereagh solemnly and with emphasis declared to the House that 'Colonel M'Mahon was incapable of receiving his Royal Highness's commands in the constitutional sense of the word or of carrying them into effect—and that the individuals now exercising the function of the ministers of the Crown were alone responsible.'

The importance attached to the matter under debate was clear from the fact that both the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary (Dudley Ryder) deemed it necessary to come to the support of Castlereagh. Perceval maintained that the question had been brought before the House 'with a great deal of unnecessary pomp and importance', and poked fun, in the traditional Parliamentary fashion, at the 'renowned champions of constitutional principles, the great advocates of consti-

tutional rights', who saw no reason why an honest working man, like the Prince Regent, should shrink from doing a good day's work for a good day's pay! What did he want with an assistant? Colonel M'Mahon's appointment was not to a 'new' office nor to a 'State' office; the Private Secretary would not be 'competent to communicate the pleasure of the Prince Regent' in any way that could authorize any subject in the land to attend to it or act upon it with responsibility'. He was simply a superior domestic servant appointed to 'relieve the bodily and manual labour which by the prodigious influx of public business attached to the functions of the head of the executive Government'.

Ponsonby professed to be apprehensive lest it 'would soon be found that the Private Secretary of the Prince Regent had become the Prime Minister of England'. Whitbread, at great length, followed his nominal leader and Tierney supported Whitbread. It was, in fine, a full-dress debate, with both front benches actively engaged. On a division the Government won by a majority of 76 (176 against 100), but some months later, when the storm had somewhat abated, Lord Castlereagh announced that the Government had bowed to the evident sense of the House of Commons: the Prince Regent had been graciously pleased to direct that the salary of Colonel M'Mahon should be paid out of his privy purse.

That was, in a parliamentary sense, the end of the matter,<sup>1</sup> and Lord Castlereagh's exposition of constitutional doctrine is now recognized as the *locus classicus* on the subject.

The office of Private Secretary to the Sovereign has become one of immense and ever increasing importance. But the functions of that official have been invariably

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *P.D.*, xxi. 112; xxi. 900-7, 912-30; xxii. 120, 332-64; xxiii. 476.

## QUEEN VICTORIA'S SECRETARIES

restricted to the limits originally defined by Lord Castlereagh. The accession of a female Sovereign to the throne in 1837 revived public interest in the question so pertinaciously debated in 1812. Before her accession the Princess Victoria had been surrounded by foreigners. In matters of moment she had relied mainly on the advice of her uncle and foster-father Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, afterwards King of the Belgians. At Prince Leopold's suggestion his own Private Secretary Baron Stockmar had, when the Princess reached her majority, been appointed to direct her political education. Her first governess had been Fraulein (afterwards Baroness) Lehzen, and Lehzen continued to act as her domestic Private Secretary after the Queen's accession to the throne. Both to Lehzen and Stockmar the Queen was greatly attached, and when the question of a Private Secretary was first raised the Queen's natural but infelicitous impulse was to appoint Stockmar to the office. The matter was evidently one of first-rate political importance, particularly in the case of a young and inexperienced female Sovereign. It was discussed privately but with some heat in political circles, and when it was publicly rumoured that Stockmar was acting as the Queen's Private Secretary, there was a considerable and not unintelligible ferment. Lord Melbourne, indeed, deemed it necessary to issue a formal and categorical denial of the statement. But if Stockmar was not the Queen's Private Secretary, who was? In order to avoid any further discussion, certain to cause pain and annoyance to his royal mistress, Lord Melbourne, with his unvarying and inimitable tact, himself assumed, in addition to his work as Prime Minister, the functions of a Private Secretary. After the Queen's marriage the latter were transferred to the Prince Consort, who conscientiously fulfilled them until the day of his death. During 1862 General the Hon.

Charles Grey began to act as Private Secretary to his bereaved mistress. General Grey had served his father in that capacity when Lord Grey was Prime Minister; as a member of the House of Commons from 1831 to 1837 he was sufficiently familiar with parliamentary life; he had been one of Queen Victoria's equerries almost from her accession, and from 1849 onwards had served the Prince Consort as Private Secretary. He was, consequently, well trained in the duties now imposed upon him, but according to the *Queen's Journal* (10 January 1862) he was at first 'a little nervous'. His appointment was officially gazetted only in 1867, and he continued to hold it, with great advantage to the Sovereign and the State until his death in 1870. Since then there has never been wanting a due succession of fit persons qualified to perform functions as responsible as they are delicate.

The 'M'Mahon business', then, though strangely ignored by Constitutional historians, had a real and permanent reaction upon the evolution of the Constitution, and the principles laid down by Lord Castlereagh in 1812 as governing the position of Private Secretary to the Sovereign have been accepted as authoritative and have been consistently observed.

Much more serious than the M'Mahon episode was the social condition of certain manufacturing districts in England. The social and economic results of the Industrial Revolution will demand attention in a later chapter. Not until the conclusion of peace were they generally recognized; not until then could Parliament give consideration to a matter of the first importance.

For the moment it must suffice to say that during the winter of 1811-12, grave disorders broke out in the county and town of Nottingham, and in the adjacent districts of Leicestershire and Derbyshire. Great distress

## SOCIAL DISORDER

had undoubtedly been caused by the change over from hand-made to machine-made goods, and in particular by the introduction of stocking and lace-frame machinery. As far back as 1779 a half-witted boy, named Ned Lud, had drawn public attention to this matter by smashing some stocking-frames in a Leicestershire village. This lad gave his name to the agitation which broke out in the winter of 1811-12, and again after the conclusion of the war.

In November 1811 a number of Nottingham weavers attacked the houses of manufacturers who had introduced the new frames. The magistrates called in the aid of the military, but the attacks were made on individual manufacturers by small parties of weavers who, having accomplished their object, dispersed before the victims of their violence could obtain assistance.

The Government could not but regard these disturbances, which soon spread to the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire with grave concern. Between November 14th and December 9th a force of 1,000 infantry and 900 cavalry was sent to Nottingham, and two more regiments in January 1812. But it soon became clear that the law needed strengthening. Accordingly on February 14 1812, the Home Secretary (Mr. Ryder) introduced two Bills. One provided for 'the more exemplary punishment of persons destroying or injuring any stocking or lace-frames, etc.'; the other was to enable the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, the Sheriff or five Justices, to obtain lists of all the adult male inhabitants of the county, and therefrom to select a body of special constables, and establish watch and ward throughout the county.

Prosecutions ensued, and several of the ringleaders suffered the extreme penalty authorized by the former of these two Acts, but a Secret Committee appointed by the House of Lords reported that although the 'convictions

## CASTLEREAGH

and executions at Lancaster and Chester appear to make a considerable impression, they have been far from restoring peace and security to the disturbed districts'. In proroguing Parliament on July 30 the Prince Regent referred to the 'utmost concern' with which he had observed the spirit of insubordination and outrage which had appeared in some parts of the country, and applauded the diligence of Parliament 'in the investigation of the causes' of those outrages, and the 'wise measures' taken for their suppression.

For those 'wise measures' the leader of the House had a full share of responsibility, and there can be no doubt that the experience gained in the year 1812, had a great influence on the policy which he felt constrained to adopt in the still more serious situation which developed after the conclusion of peace.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile complaints were made in Parliament in regard to the conduct and management of various gaols in different parts of the country, and Castlereagh acceded to the request of Romilly that an inquiry should be held.<sup>2</sup> To Lord Castlereagh also it fell to communicate to the House of Commons a message from the Prince Regent respecting the disturbed state of certain counties in England and to move for the appointment of a Committee of Secrecy to consider it.

On the Report of that Committee Lord Castlereagh based the Bill which on July 10th he introduced for the 'preservation of the public peace in the disturbed counties and to give additional powers to the justices for a limited time for that purpose'. With great skill and admirable temper he piloted the Bill through the House of Commons<sup>3</sup>; Lord Sidmouth who, on the formation of the Liverpool Government became Home

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, c. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> *P.D.*, xxiii. 755.

<sup>3</sup> For Castlereagh's speeches on these matters cf. *P.D.*, xxiii. 755, 900, 962-94, 1052, 1055, 1060, 1062.

## THE CURRENCY

Secretary, performed a similar office in the House of Lords and the Bill became law before the close of the Session.

Another matter which, in the Session of 1812, engaged Castlereagh's attention was the state of the currency.

Scarcity of currency was a matter of common complaint not only in Great Britain but in Ireland. On March 17 Lord Castlereagh presented a petition from the people of Belfast complaining of the 'excessive price and scarcity of guineas' and praying that they might be 'put on the same footing as Great Britain in any future Bill . . . respecting payments in specie'. Castlereagh confessed that in the previous Session he had opposed the extension to Ireland of the Bill then making Bank Notes in certain cases legal tender passed, 'because there were scarcely any Irish members at that time in the House'. Since that time, however, guineas had become so scarce in Ireland that they commanded a premium of 4s. 6d. to 5s., or an increase of 25 per cent. above par value. But for the 'humanity and liberal sentiments of the greatest part of the landlords' this would have borne very hardly on such tenants as were obliged to pay their rents in gold. He cordially supported, therefore, the Bill introduced on the same day by Perceval for amending the Act passed in 1811 and in particular for extending the Act to Ireland. It was, in his judgement, only reasonable that as guineas had practically gone out of circulation and the debtor could not pay in gold, he ought to be 'protected by law from being called upon to do that which it was totally out of his power to effect'.

On second reading the Bill encountered, notably from Ponsonby, some opposition, but it was again powerfully supported not only by Castlereagh but by Wellesley Pole who in October 1809 had succeeded his

brother Sir Arthur Wellesley as Chief Secretary for Ireland, to be in turn succeeded (August 1812) by Robert Peel. The Bill passed its second reading in a thin House by a majority of 45 (Ayes 61, Noes 16), and despite a formal protest by two peers against its third reading in the Lords, was passed into law.<sup>1</sup>

Among other Irish questions periodically raised in Parliament the most important was that of Catholic Emancipation, but even more insistent, for the moment, was the question of Tithes. In regard to this question Lord Castlereagh professed that he 'had always been friendly to a commutation for tithes if it were found practicable', but emphasized the difficulty of discovering any remedy which would not be worse than the disease. He insisted, moreover, that 'any arrangement must go on the principle that the clergy had an absolute estate equal to one-tenth of the growing tillage of the country', but confessed that 'notwithstanding all the pains he had taken on the subject' he had found very great difficulty in suggesting a solution equitable to all parties.<sup>2</sup> The difficulty was not peculiar to Castlereagh, nor has the problem that puzzled him, though summarily solved in Ireland, ever found its solution in England.

Though no longer departmentally responsible for the Army it was no small part of Castlereagh's duty both as Foreign Secretary and leader of the House to keep the closest watch upon the progress of the war, and to call upon the House, not infrequently, to sanction subsidies to our allies, as well as to provide for the sustenance of our own efforts in the Peninsula, alike by reinforcements and by financial expenditure. Perhaps the best exposition of his military policy is to be found in the great speech which he addressed to the House of Commons,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. for Castlereagh's speeches on this subject: *P.D.*, xxii. 2, 7, 200, 287.

<sup>2</sup> *P.D.*, xxiii. 729, 745.



almost on the eve of his departure for the Allied Headquarters. The close student of Castlereagh's career will find it convenient to refer also to his speeches on the financial subsidies to Portugal, and on those payable under treaty to the King of Sicily. The former was delivered on March 16th 1812; the latter on March 25th. If ever a subsidy could be justified it was, he contended, that to Portugal which could 'hardly be considered in the light of a subsidy' since it represented 'such effectual aid to the British army', and was for the sustenance of a policy already crowned with 'the most brilliant success'.<sup>1</sup>

The subsidy to Sicily was in a rather different category. The military establishment of the Kingdom of Sicily had been placed under the control of Lord William Bentinck, and that sentimental doctrinaire had induced the Bourbon King to confer the blessings of Parliamentary Government upon a people grotesquely incapable of appreciating them. But on purely military grounds it was unquestionably important to secure Sicily against the fate which had befallen Naples, and to 'stop the progress of an overwhelming tyranny which would sweep away every vestige of liberty'.<sup>2</sup>

On similar grounds, but with a much more extended application Castlereagh justified the large subsidies which Great Britain was making to the members of what he could truly describe, in November 1813, as the 'Great Confederacy of Europe'. He contended that it was 'owing to the continued moderation and firmness of our counsels that Europe was in its present state. It had been restored from the humiliation and ruin which had overwhelmed it to a proud height of honour and independence, by the prudence not less than by the magnificence of our exertions. 'We had wisely kept our efforts within the limits of our resources; by a

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxi. 1298-1302.

<sup>2</sup> *P.D.*, xxii. 187-8.

premature and inconsiderate waste of strength the national spirit would have been broken down, and our career arrested in its progress.' But the moment had now come for the world to make 'one great effort for its redemption' and we must not 'suffer all the advantages and all the glory which has been gained, to be lost by a deficiency of cordial co-operation on the part of Great Britain'. That was the text on which Castlereagh based a discourse which was primarily directed to an exposition of the new plan proposed by the Government for reinforcing the army in the field by voluntary recruitment from the militia.<sup>1</sup> The Bill to authorize the execution of the plan was passed rapidly through both Houses almost without a dissentient voice. In the following month Lord Castlereagh left England for the Headquarters of the Allies.

The foregoing paragraphs, though necessarily fragmentary, may at least serve to indicate the multifarious questions with which, apart from his departmental work at the Foreign Office, Lord Castlereagh was compelled to deal. But his supreme task, evidenced by the great speech of November 11th, was to keep in being a European Coalition sufficiently cohesive and sufficiently powerful to inflict upon Napoleon the decisive defeat which could alone deliver the Continent from his tyranny, and dissipate the danger which, so long as 'the Corsican' was undefeated, must continue to threaten Great Britain and her far-flung Empire.

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxvii. 87-94.

## CHAPTER XV

### CASTLEREAGH ON MISSION—THE GRAND ALLIANCE

LORD CASTLEREAGH arrived at Bâle on January 18 1814. His presence was eagerly anticipated not only by the British envoys accredited to the three allied sovereigns but by at least one of those sovereigns and by all their ministers. The Czar Alexander was particularly anxious, for reasons which will appear, to get in the first word with the British statesman. Fortunately, however, the Czar had already left for the Army Headquarters, and Castlereagh, consequently, seized the welcome opportunity of a preparatory talk with Metternich.

These conversations were of the first importance. Of Metternich Lord Liverpool had formed no very favourable opinion: 'The Emperor of Austria I believe', he said, 'to be an honest man, but he has a Minister in whom no one can trust; who considers all policy as consisting in *finesse* and trick; and who has got his Government and himself into more difficulties by his devices than could have occurred from a plain course of dealing.' Lord Castlereagh soon came to have a better understanding of the man with whom he was to be, during the remainder of his life, in close association, if not always in complete agreement. 'Metternich', wrote Castlereagh, 'is constitutionally temporizing; but more faults are ascribed to him than he possesses. He has his full share of them, but mixed up with remarkable capacity for carrying forward the machine, more so than any one else at Headquarters.' The impression made by Castlereagh upon

Metternich was even more flattering. 'Castlereagh', he wrote to Schwarzenberg, 'behaves like an angel'. And elsewhere: 'I can't congratulate myself enough about Castlereagh. . . . I find that in no single case does he differ from us, I can assure you that he is most peacefully inclined—peacefully in our sense.' Nor did his mature judgement contradict his first impressions, for in his *Memoirs* he writes: 'Absolutely straight, a stranger to all prejudice, as just as he is kind, Lord Castlereagh knew at a glance how to distinguish the truth in everything.'<sup>1</sup>

No wonder that Metternich welcomed Castlereagh's arrival, and found encouragement in his peaceful inclinations—in the Austrian sense. For between the Austrians and the Czar Alexander there was a profound disagreement about the peace to be imposed upon France. That even Metternich would be content, after the successful invasion of France, with the terms proposed to Napoleon from Frankfort was not to be expected. Much less Alexander. The Czar was all for the prosecution of the war *à outrance*, for the deposition of Napoleon, and for a spectacular entry into Paris which should obliterate the painful memory of Napoleon's entry into Moscow. Who was to occupy the throne of France after Napoleon's deposition the Czar had not definitely decided, but his inclination at the moment was in favour of the French peasant who had become Crown Prince of Sweden. If only for the sake of the Empress—an Austrian Archduchess—Metternich and his master would have preferred to leave Napoleon on the throne of France, but of a France restricted to its 'ancient limits'. The English Prince Regent certainly, and perhaps his Prime Minister, strongly favoured a Bourbon restoration, but the Cabinet consistently held to the opinion that the matter was one not for the allies but for the French people; they had no wish to incur the reproaches of English Liberals by

<sup>1</sup> A. Cecil: *Metternich*, p. 103.

# CASTLEREAGH'S VIEWS ON PEACE TERMS

insisting upon the restoration of the Bourbons as a condition of peace with France. Liverpool, indeed, after a rather painful interview with the Duc d'Artois, went so far as to refuse a passport to him or his sons, then resident in England, or in any way to facilitate their return to France.<sup>1</sup>

Castlereagh cordially endorsed the prudent attitude of his Chief, and writing from Chatillon (February 8 1814) to Mr. Thornton declared that so long as he [Napoleon] continued to be recognized by the French people as their ruler the allies were bound to carry on negotiations with him. Thornton was further instructed to intimate to Bernadotte that the British Government were averse to the idea of a Regency in France or to '*substituting another military chief in his* [Napoleon's] *room*'. Moreover, Bernadotte might as well be told that in any case France will be reduced 'within her ancient limits', and that the Low Countries will be annexed to Holland.<sup>2</sup> To put the matter with undiplomatic bluntness, the British Government would give no support to the candidature of Bernadotte, nor to the recognition of Napoleon's Austrian wife as Regent.<sup>3</sup>

Metternich was quickly brought round to Castlereagh's view: the only choice for the French throne lay between Buonaparte and the Bourbons.<sup>4</sup> A recent biographer of Metternich is at pains to insist that the idea that Castlereagh supplanted Metternich as 'the minister of the coalition' can only be regarded as 'a piece of insular patriotism'. Supplant Metternich Castlereagh did not; but of all the allied diplomatists he was, during 1814, incomparably the most influential. If he was less clever than Metternich he was more wise, and, throughout the difficult and tortuous negotiations which preceded the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. a remarkable *Memorandum* drafted by Liverpool for the Cabinet, *op. Yonge*, I. 483.

<sup>2</sup> *C.C.*, IX. 245-9

<sup>3</sup> *W.S.D.*, VIII. 535.

first abdication of Napoleon, it was he, as representing Great Britain, who held the balance between Metternich and Alexander, between an Austrian Emperor who was the father-in-law of Napoleon, and a Russian Czar who, with his complaisant Prussian ally, was bent on the humiliation of a Buonaparte, even if his dethronement involved crowning in his place a Bernadotte.

Thus Castlereagh, if no dictator, was at least the arbiter of Europe, and for that office he was peculiarly well qualified not less by the position of the Power he represented than by his personal endowments. How deep was the impression made by Castlereagh upon those who were in closest touch with him may be gathered from a letter written twenty-five years later by Lord Ripon, who, as Mr. F. J. Robinson, accompanied Lord Castlereagh on his mission to the allies.

During their journey to Bâle Castlereagh discussed the whole situation 'confidentially and unreservedly' with Mr. Robinson; he foresaw the difficulties and explained how he hoped to bring the conflicting views of the allies into harmony. 'No man', wrote Lord Ripon, 'was ever better calculated so to transact business himself, and to bring others to act with him in such a manner than Lord Londonderry. The suavity and dignity of his manners, his habitual patience and self-command, his considerate tolerance of difference of opinion in others, all fitted him for such a task; whilst his firmness, when he knew he was right, in no degree detracted from the influence of his conciliatory demeanour . . . and I heard at the time, from several of the eminent men with whom his discussions were thus carried on, that it conduced in every way not less to the precision and harmony than to the promptitude and energy of their decisions.' As an illustration, Lord Ripon referred to the promptitude with which Castlereagh acted in the military crisis which ensued upon Napoleon's brilliantly successful strategy

## ‘ARBITER OF EUROPE’

(10-18 February) in the campaign of 1814. Blücher's impetuous and reckless advance, Schwarzenberg's dilatory march towards Troyes, above all the jealousy which impeded Bernadotte's co-operation with his allies, had created a most dangerous situation. In mid-February it seemed not impossible that Napoleon's genius might avail to give him one more triumph against almost impossible odds. Castlereagh it was who insisted that the Swedes *must* effect a junction with the Prussians; they did; and enabled Blücher to win the final victory. 'It is not, then,' wrote Lord Ripon, 'too much to say that the energy displayed by Lord Londonderry at this crisis decided the fate of the campaign. And, had he been an ordinary man, without the talent to discern what the exigency of the moment required, without capacity to enforce its adoption, or without that influence over others which ensured their cordial co-operation, who can say how different the result might have been, or how long the pacification of the world might have been delayed.'<sup>1</sup>

But this citation from Lord Ripon anticipates the development of the diplomatic situation. We left Lord Castlereagh conferring with Metternich at Bâle. His whole time cannot have been spent in conversations, for on one day (January 22nd), he wrote to Lord Aberdeen, to Lord Clancarty (just appointed to represent Great Britain at The Hague), to Lord Burghesh, to Lord William Bentinck in Sicily, to the Lords of the Treasury at home, not to mention three letters addressed to his colleague Lord Bathurst at the War Office, and three to his chief at 10, Downing Street. On January 25th Castlereagh joined the Czar Alexander at the Army Headquarters at Langres.

At Langres were laid the foundations of the European Concert. There was held the first of the many confer-

<sup>1</sup> C.C., I. 125-30.

ences at which Castlereagh and Metternich, with Hardenberg, representing Prussia, and Nesselrode, for Russia, were to decide the fate of Europe for long days to come. But, in addition to these great statesmen, Alexander was himself at Langres.

The Czar Alexander offers a curious and interesting study in psychology. He was a man of many moods, the victim of contradictory impulses. Obstinate in adherence to what he believed to be his own convictions, he was easily influenced by those whom he admitted to intimacy. And his intimates came from many countries and represented violently opposed opinions. From his tutor Frédéric César de la Harpe, a Swiss who imported into Russia the philosophy of Rousseau, Alexander imbibed the sour milk of Jacobinism. Stein, German nationalist and Prussian reformer, impressed upon the Czar the importance of nationality as a factor in politics. Prince Adam Czartoriski, his Polish aide-de-camp, must share with the Baroness von Krüdener the credit of persuading Alexander to apply the principles of Christianity to the conduct of diplomacy, and of planting in his impressionable mind the seeds which fructified in the Holy Alliance. Nor must mention be omitted of Count Giovanni Antonio Capo d'Istria, a Corfist, who accompanied the Czar to Vienna and exercised no little influence on the decisions of the Congress ; or of Pozzo di Borgo, a Corsican, who was the first Russian ambassador in Paris after the Bourbon restoration. Successively, very often simultaneously, subject to these influences, the Czar himself was curiously compounded of lofty idealism and calculating shrewdness, of mystical piety and worldly ambition, of generous enthusiasm and Muscovite cunning.

To any negotiations with Napoleon the Czar was definitely opposed. Metternich and Castlereagh were not. Castlereagh was, indeed, insistent that Spain,



Portugal and Italy must all recover their independence, but the absolutely vital condition of any peace with England was the exclusion of France from Antwerp, and the abandonment of any naval establishment on the Scheldt. The union of the southern and northern Netherlands under one King would afford the strongest barrier to any attempted aggression from France, and the most effective guarantee of British security. If France and Europe consented to that scheme, but not otherwise, Great Britain was prepared to consider the rendition of some of the Dutch, Danish and French colonies secured to Great Britain by her naval supremacy in the war, but on the question of her maritime rights no compromise could even be discussed, much less conceded.

None of Castlereagh's indispensable conditions created any difficulty between himself and Metternich. The Southern Netherlands had, it was true, been in the possession of the Hapsburgs for a century, but they were not possessions which the Hapsburgs cherished; they had given a good deal of trouble, and Austria had more than once tried to exchange them for Bavaria. Venetia would now more than compensate her for the loss of Belgium.

But between the Austrian and English statesmen on the one side, and Alexander with his Prussian and Swedish satellites on the other, there was, as indicated, wide divergence of opinion. Nevertheless, Castlereagh was able to report to Liverpool (29 January 1814) that the 'Council of the four Powers' (as he termed it) had agreed to the 'Langres Protocol'. There was to be no suspension of hostilities pending negotiations, and it was to be left to the Commander-in-Chief, Prince Swarzenberg, 'to conduct them with a due regard to military prudence'. In regard to the terms of peace to be offered to France, Castlereagh was able to congratulate himself and his colleagues in England 'that we may now be considered

as practically delivered from the embarrassments of the Frankfort negotiation' (embarrassments, be it parenthetically observed, due largely to the imprudence of Lord Aberdeen). It must now be not the 'natural limits' of France (the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees) to which she must be restricted, but the 'ancient limits', i.e. to the frontiers of 1792. 'All unbecoming interference in the internal affairs of France' was 'on all sides' disclaimed, and Castlereagh was able to gain the assent of the other ministers to his own view that 'the Russian proposition of denying to France any right to inquire beyond the question of her own limits was too odious a principle to be maintained'.<sup>1</sup>

After Blücher's brilliant victory over Napoleon at La Rothiere (1 February), a Conference, attended by all the allied plenipotentiaries, opened at Châtillon (5 February). Great Britain was represented by Lord Cathcart, Lord Aberdeen and Sir Charles Stewart, her ambassadors at the Courts of Petersburg, Vienna and Berlin respectively, but every important point was, of course, referred to the Secretary of State. Similarly, Austria was formally represented not by Prince Metternich but by Count Stadion. Napoleon sent Caulaincourt to the Congress, but whether that charming diplomatist was in possession of plenary powers neither he himself nor the allies could from day to day be certain. Powers given to him one day were withdrawn on the next, and renewed the day after, according to the fortune attending operations in the field. Napoleon himself continually halted between two opinions. Could an Emperor of the French, still more could the new Charlemagne, condescend to the position of a King of a France reduced to its 'ancient limits'? A Bourbon might survive that disgrace; a Buonaparte could not.

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, pp. 141-5 and cf. for other letters from Castlereagh at Langres, *ibid.*, pp. 138-40.

But apart from a disposition to identify 'ancient limits' with 'les limites naturelles', Caulaincourt demanded to know how the allies were proposing to reconstruct the map of Europe, outside the limits of France. Nor did Castlereagh think the demand unreasonable.<sup>1</sup> 'To compel France *alone* to return within her ancient limits is not', argued Caulaincourt, 'to *restore* the balance of power, but to *destroy* it, to serve the purpose of the States which are now coalesced against that power.' But it was not for Caulaincourt to argue. On February 9th the Czar impatiently recalled his envoy from Châtillon, and the Congress adjourned. Then came a sudden change. Between February 8th and 15th Napoleon won a series of victories over Blücher on the Marne, with the result that negotiations were hastily resumed on the 17th at Châtillon. In the meantime, Castlereagh had hurried off to Headquarters at Troyes and there had a stormy interview with the Czar (13 February). The Czar was 'bent upon finding himself in Paris' and wished to suspend all negotiations until they could be resumed in the capital. Castlereagh countered with a pertinent question: 'How long he (the Czar) would undertake to *keep his army* in France to fight the battles of a Bourbon against Buonaparte and whether his allies would engage for theirs.' And, assuming agreement among the allies, what would be the attitude of the French people towards a King thus forced upon them?

The Czar's only reply to this thrust was to insinuate that Castlereagh did not represent the views of the Prince Regent or his Cabinet colleagues—an insinuation more than once repeated by the Czar, and founded upon a letter from Count Lieven, the Russian Ambassador in London, to Count Nesselrode, and by the latter communicated not only to his master, but to Metternich and other diplomatists at Châtillon, including Lord Cathcart.

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 141.

That letter, as Castlereagh confessed in a letter to Lord Liverpool, had placed him in a 'most distressing predicament', but he bluntly told the Czar that Count Lieven's conception of the situation in England was totally inaccurate, and that the Czar would do well to regard him (Castlereagh) as the only authorized exponent of British policy.<sup>1</sup>

The storm at Troyes cleared the air. Castlereagh returned to Châtillon on February 16, to find that Napoleon's victories over Blücher had induced a more reasonable temper among the diplomatists.

Terms were rapidly agreed by the allies and sent to Napoleon, but only to be rejected by him. His armies were once more winning victories. Between February 17th and 21st he inflicted a series of blows upon Schwarzenberg so heavy as to compel him to retreat on Bar-sur-Aube. The effect upon the councils of the allies was immediate. 'I could not but perceive' wrote Castlereagh on the 26th to Liverpool, 'the altered tone of my colleagues . . . their impressions being strongly tinged by the demoralizing influence of a rapid transition from an advance made under very lofty pretensions, to a retreat of some embarrassment and of much disappointment and recrimination.'<sup>2</sup>

This was Castlereagh's opportunity. For weeks past he had been labouring with unwearied patience to induce the allies to enter into such mutual engagements as would transform a temporary alliance into a permanent confederacy. Castlereagh's relations with the Czar were by this time much improved. 'The discussions at Troyes', he writes to Liverpool (5 March 1814), 'were necessarily painful and gave to my intercourse with the Emperor a more controversial character than I could have wished; and I have reason to know that he was not a little

<sup>1</sup> C.C., IX, 266-7, and *British Diplomacy*, pp. 147-58.

<sup>2</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 160.

## THE TREATIES OF CHAUMONT

impatient of the opposition he had met with from me; but this is all gone by and His Imperial Majesty now encourages me to come to him without form. I see him almost every day, and he receives me with great kindness and converses with me freely on all subjects.’<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh’s unremitting efforts were crowned with success by the signature (9 March 1814) of the tripartite Treaties of Chaumont. The allies agreed not only to prosecute the war vigorously until Napoleon was defeated, but after the conclusion of peace to afford to each other mutual protection against renewed attacks from France. Each of the contracting Powers agreed to furnish for the immediate prosecution of the war 150,000 men, and 60,000 men for the ulterior objects of the alliance. Great Britain bound herself to pay into the common fund an annual subsidy of £5,000,000, with the option of further specified payments, in lieu of her contingent in men. No Power was to conclude a separate peace with France, and the Treaty was to remain in force for at least twenty years.

Thus did Castlereagh lay the foundations of that ‘Concert of Europe’ which, further cemented, by the Quadruple Treaty of November 20 1815, governed the international relations of the Western Powers for the remainder of Castlereagh’s life. In his letter to his subordinate at the Foreign Office, enclosing the text of ‘my treaty’, Castlereagh gives one of the indications of his personal feelings: ‘We four ministers, when signing, happened to be sitting at a whist table. It was agreed that never were the stakes so high at any former party. My modesty would have prevented my offering it; but as they chose to make us a military power I was determined not to play a second fiddle. The fact is that . . . our engagement is equal to theirs united. [Then follow the details given above.] What an extraordinary display

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 164.

of power! This, I trust, will put an end to any doubts as to the claim we have to an opinion on Continental matters.’<sup>1</sup>

To the public articles of the Treaty of Chaumont were added a number of secret articles which anticipated, almost verbally, the main provisions of the Treaties subsequently concluded at Paris and Vienna. Meanwhile, Napoleon’s final terms had been submitted to the allied diplomatists at Châtillon and rejected. Metternich did his utmost to induce Napoleon to make such concessions as would obviate the necessity of depriving him of the French throne. In vain. Napoleon would not abandon his claims on Antwerp, Mainz and Mantua—the strategical points essential for offensive operations against Great Britain, Germany, Austria and North Italy. How great was the reliance both of Metternich and Caulaincourt upon the moderation, reasonableness and peacemaking disposition of Castlereagh may be judged by letters exchanged between the Austrian and French diplomatists. ‘I will do my utmost’, wrote Metternich, ‘to keep Lord Castlereagh here for a few days: the moment he has gone all hope of peace has vanished’. ‘If it depended on me’, replied Caulaincourt, ‘your hopes [of peace] would be speedily realized. I should have no doubt they would be, were I sure that yourself and Lord Castlereagh were to be the instruments of this work, as desirable as it is glorious.’ Napoleon was, however, obdurate: the Conference of Châtillon finally broke up on 19 March 1814.

The war was ending. After Blücher’s victory at Laon (March 10) and Swarzenberg’s at Arcis-sur-Aube (March 20), Napoleon, hoping to cut off the retreat of the allies, marched eastwards: the allies, ignoring this manœuvre, marched straight on Paris. Paris surrendered on March 30, and on the following day the allies, led by the Czar

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 166.

at the head of his Guards, entered in triumph the French capital.

Napoleon's power was broken. For nine weeks, though confronted by three armies each stronger than his own, the great soldier had held the allies at bay simply by the force of incomparably brilliant strategy, but at last he was beaten.

Paris at the critical moment had failed him. The French Senate, hastily summoned by Talleyrand as Vice-Grand-Elector, was officially informed that the Allies would no longer negotiate with Napoleon or any member of his family. The Empress had already fled from Paris with the King of Rome. The Senate immediately set up a Provisional Government, formally dethroned Napoleon, repudiated the hereditary rights of his family and recalled Louis XVIII. The die was cast. Talleyrand had whispered into the ear of Alexander—ever susceptible to flattery, ever wavering and inconstant—the magic word *legitimacy*. But, as will be seen, it was to be legitimacy limited by Charter. Talleyrand had solved the difficulties of Metternich and Castlereagh.

The two statesmen had remained at Dijon while Alexander, with the Prussian King at his side, celebrated his triumph in Paris. But Castlereagh arrived at Paris on April 10th. Lady Castlereagh joined him on the 18th, and they remained there until the conclusion of the first Peace of Paris on May 30th.

A treaty was concluded with Napoleon at Fontainebleau on April 11th. That treaty was mainly the work of the Czar Alexander, delighted with the opportunity, in the absence of the restraining influence of Metternich and Castlereagh, of 'giving (in his own words) an illustrious example to the universe of liberality to a prostrate enemy'. With the Czar's effort Castlereagh was far from satisfied, least of all with the selection of Elba as the seat of Buonaparte's retirement, but 'I did

not feel', as he wrote to Liverpool, 'that I could encourage the alternative which Caulaincourt assured me Buonaparte repeatedly mentioned, namely, an asylum in England'. Under the treaty Napoleon was to enjoy full sovereignty over Elba and to retain the title of Emperor; ample provision was made for him and all the members of his family, while the Empress was to have the Duchies of Parma, Piacenza and Guastalla with succession to her son.

Louis XVIII re-entered Paris after an absence of three and twenty years on May 3rd, and shortly afterwards issued a Charter which guaranteed a Parliamentary Constitution to France. Another Bourbon was restored, in the person of Ferdinand VII to his throne at Madrid (14 May) and a third, although only after a long interval and many tortuous proceedings, was enabled once again to unite Naples with Sicily.

Meanwhile, terms of peace had to be negotiated with Bourbon France. Castlereagh, ever faithful to his thesis that the war had been fought not against France but against Napoleon, profoundly anxious, also, that the peace should not be such a one as to provoke France to an early renewal of war, insisted that the terms should be as lenient as possible. They were. Castlereagh was not, indeed, the man to forget the interests of his own country. All that he regarded as vital to those interests he obtained. In the East Indies the French were limited to a commercial occupation of their factories: they were not to maintain any military force except for police purposes; Ceylon, taken from the Dutch, remained, as did Cape Colony and Mauritius, in British hands. Our ocean highway to India was thus carefully guarded. All the colonies captured in the war from the French, with the exception of Tobago and St. Lucia, were restored to them; but Malta was retained. Holland, 'placed under the sovereignty of the



House of Orange', was to receive 'an increase of territory', but of what that increase should consist there was (except privately) no mention. It was, however, stipulated (art. vi) that the sovereignty of Holland should in no case 'belong to a prince wearing or destined to wear a foreign crown'.

The most difficult question for Castlereagh was the future of the Slave Trade. Feeling on that subject in England was remarkable alike for intensity and unanimity. After prolonged negotiation Castlereagh obtained from France a promise to abolish, within five years, the slave trade, though his motives in pressing for its abolition laid him and his country open to those insinuations of hypocrisy from which France has rarely refrained. In writing to Liverpool Castlereagh strongly recommended that, however strong English opinion on this subject might be, 'our demands should not be pushed to an extreme'. 'My feeling is', he added, 'that on grounds of general policy we ought not to attempt to tie France too tight on this question. If we do, it will make the abolition odious in France and we shall be considered as influenced by a secret wish to prevent the removal (? renewal) of her colonial interests. The friends of abolition ought also to weigh the immense value of having France pledged [with a view to the forthcoming Congress] to this question.' Progress will be very slow 'unless the abolition can be made general. If we get France on our side we shall have a preponderance of authority; without her aid I shall despair of bringing Spain and Portugal into our views'.<sup>1</sup>

For the rest France got off easily. She was indeed restricted, except for Avignon, a substantial slice of Savoy, and some strips of territory on her north-eastern frontier, to the limits of 1792; but no war indemnity was

<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh to Liverpool 19 May 1814 (*British Diplomacy*, p. 185). Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 177-86 *passim*.

demand, and, with the exception of the Vienna library and some trophies from Berlin, France was not even required to restore the art treasures which Napoleon had stolen from almost every capital in Europe. Apart from the terms to be granted to France there were prolonged discussions in Paris as to the 'Continental settlement'. The main points in dispute were concerned with the future of Poland and Saxony. Castlereagh reported to Liverpool the 'strong desire felt by Prussia and Austria to bring both Russia and France to some understanding upon the main principles of the continental arrangements . . . previous to our stipulating away our conquests'. Their anxiety, though natural, led to 'a tedious and elaborate examination of this very complicated and arduous question'. Nothing was, in fact, decided, but it was agreed that all the belligerents should, within two months, send plenipotentiaries to a general Congress to be held at Vienna.

By secret articles it was agreed that Sardinia should receive Genoa, in compensation for the loss of part of Savoy, that the German territories conquered by France on the left bank of the Rhine should 'contribute to the aggrandisement of Holland' and to the compensation of Prussia and other German States. The independence of Switzerland was to be guaranteed both by France and the Allied Powers.

Castlereagh's colleagues were, meanwhile, impatient for his return to England. Both in Cabinet and in the House of Commons his presence was sorely needed. But he rightly recognized that his immediate duty kept him in Paris. 'I am truly sorry', he wrote to Liverpool, 'to occasion any embarrassment at home by being absent from my post; but I really work as hard as a man can well do, in such a town as Paris, to finish my work: and I cannot persuade myself it would be safe to leave

it incomplete'.<sup>1</sup> He offered to send Robinson home, if necessary, but begged that if he did, Hamilton might replace him 'as the quantity of business here is considerable'. He did not add, as he might well have done, that he got little help from Aberdeen, Cathcart or Stewart, and that he was, anyhow, ridiculously understaffed. But the scale of 1814 was as much less extravagant than that of 1919 as the personal element was more efficient.

Directly the treaty was signed Castlereagh returned to England. When (6 June) he made his reappearance in the House of Commons the whole House rose to welcome him. Even the Official Report breaks its consistent silence on such incidents: 'About five o'clock Lord Castlereagh entered the House for the first time since his return from France, and was greeted with loud and most animated cheering, frequently repeated from every part of the House. Business was for some moments suspended. His Lordship bowed and took his seat amidst the acclamations of the members.'<sup>2</sup>

Lord Castlereagh's first duty was to present to the House a copy of the 'Treaty of Peace and Amity'. Wilberforce almost viciously refused 'to concur in the salutation' accorded to the Foreign Secretary on the ground that he had brought with him 'the death warrant of a multitude of innocent victims, men, women and children, whom he had fondly indulged the hope of his having himself rescued from destruction'. Castlereagh, in his brief reply, in no way resented this ungenerous imputation. He believed that the treaty, though falling short of the hopes entertained either by Wilberforce or himself, would 'prove a powerful instrument in the accomplishment of that great work in which [Wilberforce] had been so strenuous and successful a labourer'. The cause of abolition could only be

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> *P.D.*, xxvii. 1072.

successful when 'all nations' should cordially concur in it. Castlereagh believed, and as it proved not groundlessly, that he had secured substantial advance towards an end as anxiously desired by himself as by Wilberforce.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could better illustrate the liberality, largemindedness and wisdom of Castlereagh's statesmanship than his treatment of this thorny and highly controversial question. A lesser man, a man inspired, if not with less zeal, with less discretion, might well have retarded, if he had not ruined, a cause which more than any other aroused widespread enthusiasm in this country.

In another sphere, not so remote from high politics as it might appear, Castlereagh exhibited equal tact. With a view to allaying personal jealousies, and at the same time as an acknowledgement of the pre-eminent part which England had recently played in European politics, Lord Castlereagh suggested that the allied Sovereigns should be invited, before returning to their respective capitals, to visit England. But he warned Lord Liverpool that great care must be taken not to allow the Czar Alexander, already elated by his pre-eminence in Paris, to overshadow his brother of Austria. 'When I recommend you to dilute the libation to Russia, I am', he wrote, 'the last to wish it should be less palatable. The Emperor [Czar] has the greatest merit and must be held high; but he ought to be *grouped* and not made the sole feature for admiration.' As a fact, though the invitation was cordially accepted by all three sovereigns, the Emperor of Austria was prevented from coming by Italian complications and sent Metternich on a special mission to represent him.

The visitors were escorted across the Channel on June 6 by a squadron commanded by the Duke of Clarence. They were enthusiastically acclaimed in

<sup>1</sup> P.D., xxvii. 1082.

England and for three weeks were entertained at a series of characteristic functions. The City feasted them and conferred upon them its freedom; they attended Commemoration at Oxford, and received Honorary Degrees at the Encaenia; a naval review was held in their honour, and there were banquets, gala performances, and so forth without end. The Czar tried to ingratiate himself with the Whig leaders, and had 'long conversations with them', but Lord Grey, according to Creevey, thought Alexander 'a vain silly fellow'. The Czar also gave great offence to the Prince Regent by attentions to his wife. Alexander impressed the mob, but in private the Prussians made a much better impression than the Russians. Blücher, wrote Creevey, is 'a nice old man'. He, like his master and Prince Metternich and the Czar, received an Honorary Degree from Oxford.

The same honour had been conferred by diploma on the Duke of Wellington on June 15, and a still greater one awaited him at Westminster. Both Houses had voted their thanks to him along with a grant of £400,000, but Castlereagh suggested that the House of Commons should offer their congratulations to him in person. That was done on July 1st when appropriate compliments were exchanged between the Speaker and the great soldier seated within the Bar.

Two days earlier the terms of the treaty formed the subject of a full-dress debate in the House of Commons. The tactful acceptance by Castlereagh of a harmless amendment, moved by Wilberforce, relative to the slave trade, combined with Castlereagh's own speech to induce the House to vote a congratulatory address to the Crown without a division. Canning declared his 'inexpressible satisfaction' that after the acceptance of Wilberforce's amendment he 'was enabled without qualification or reservation to express his entire appro-

bation of the treaty which he had no hesitation in declaring to be the most glorious that had ever been concluded by the Government of England'.<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh's own speech was one of the greatest in his whole career. 'We have thus, Sir,' he concluded 'at length closed the war as conquerors certainly, but enjoying the rare felicity of receiving the benedictions not only of those with whom we fought, but ultimately of those against whom we fought. There is no feeling more powerful in Paris at this moment than respect for the English character. And thus, I trust, that the course we have pursued through the whole of this eventful crisis will prove permanently beneficial to the whole world.'<sup>2</sup>

Sir Archibald Alison, after the historical fashion of his day, closes his chapter on the events just recorded by a discussion of the priority to be assigned respectively to the Czar Alexander, Wellington and Castlereagh as the deliverers of mankind from the tyranny of Napoleon. His conclusion is that 'impartial justice must award the palm to the English statesman'. And he gives his reasons. 'But for him the forces of the Grand Alliance could never have been held together during the fearful crisis of 1813 and 1814; neither the chivalry of Alexander nor the generalship of Wellington could have effected the deliverance of Germany or the conquest of France, if the resources and the influence of England had not been wielded by the hand, and their power directed by the moral courage, of Castlereagh.'<sup>3</sup> In this eloquent, if pontifical, tribute the biographer of Castlereagh can but respectfully concur.

During the month which followed upon the discussion

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxviii. 447. The text of the First Treaty of Paris will be found in the same volume, pp. 173-205.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 465.

<sup>3</sup> *Lives of Castlereagh and Sir C. Stewart*, II. 493.

#### PARLIAMENTARY DUTIES

of the terms of peace Castlereagh took a full share in the routine work of Parliament. To the matter which attracted the greatest share of public attention—the relations between the Regent, his tiresome wife, and their unhappy daughter—reference may be deferred.

Parliament was prorogued on July 30. Before it met, in the late autumn, Castlereagh had left England for Vienna.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CASTLEREAGH AT THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA—THE HUNDRED DAYS

THE Congress of Vienna has acquired an unenviable reputation for social frivolity, personal intrigue and political obscurantism. That there was plenty of amusement then in that gay and fascinating city goes without saying. The crowd of visitors was, however, almost beyond its capacity to receive them. Those who could make any claim upon official or private hospitality were magnificently entertained. 'All the imperial and royal guests were lodged', wrote an Englishman then visiting Vienna, 'in the Bourg. Each Sovereign had a complete suite of rooms in the lower part of this extensive building, while their attendants, secretaries, physicians and other officers occupied the upper stories of the same edifice. For all these, establishments were regularly provided by the Austrian Court. Every royal person had a separate equipage with six or eight horses, and equerries and a crowd of servants.'<sup>1</sup> Between two and three hundred imperial carriages were said to be in daily use. The cost to the Austrian State, already bankrupt, exceeded £10,000 a day. The constant entertainments were on a truly imperial scale: receptions, boar hunts, concerts, picnics, balls and what not—especially balls. The witty remark of the Prince de

<sup>1</sup> *Travels from Vienna through Lower Hungary* (Edinburgh, 1818), by Dr. R. Bright, an eminent physician who gave his name to Bright's disease. His first-hand account of Vienna during the Congress is vivid and entertaining.



Ligne was at least half-true: 'Le Congrès danse mais ne marche pas'. Of course they danced and flirted—the crowds of pretty women and well-bred men.

But some of the men, at least, did more than flirt and dance. All through the long months from September 1814 to June 1815 they worked hard, and moulded the outlines of the European polity for a century to come.

By mid-September the ministers of the four allied Powers had all assembled in Vienna. The British mission was headed by Lord Castlereagh. With him were Lord Clancarty and Lord Cathcart, as well as his half-brother Charles (now Lord) Stewart, who was generally known in Vienna as 'Lord Pumpnickel' for the pomposity and vanity which made him the laughing-stock of the Congress. Castlereagh, whose presence was urgently needed for the Parliamentary session, had to leave Vienna on February 15th 1815, and was succeeded as the leading plenipotentiary of Great Britain by the Duke of Wellington who, since August 1814, had been British Ambassador in Paris. But by the end of March he too was summoned from Vienna to sterner work, and Lord Clancarty took his place. Prussia was represented by Hardenberg and Humboldt; Russia by its Czar with the cohort of foreign counsellors already enumerated. Metternich, of course, headed the representatives of Austria, and Talleyrand, with amazing adroitness, insinuated himself into the inner councils of the Congress as the representative of France. The Emperor Francis was the host of the Congress, and among his guests were the Prince of Orange and the Kings of Prussia, Denmark, Bavaria and Würtemberg, together with a number of German Electors, Grand Dukes and minor princes. The princes and ministers numbered in all nearly one hundred, while on the outskirts of the Congress were the 'money changers' (to

use Wellington's description)—representatives of all the great financial houses in Europe.

Half the mechanical work of the Congress was done by its secretary, Friedrich von Gentz. Gentz was a distinguished German publicist. Born at Breslau in 1764 he had held official positions both in Berlin and Vienna and for the last few years had been the constant companion and confidant of Metternich. Napoleon sneered at him as the 'wretched scribe', but he was more accurately described as 'the mercenary of the pen'. During the Congress he received large gifts both from Talleyrand and Castlereagh, but that those gifts deflected his judgement, or in any way influenced him in the performance of his duties, there is no reason to suppose. To his brilliant pen we primarily owe our knowledge of the proceedings at Vienna.

The big decisions of the Congress were, in fact, reached by five men: Metternich, Castlereagh, Hardenberg, the Czar and Talleyrand. With Talleyrand, as well as with Louis XVIII, Castlereagh had several long interviews in Paris which he took on his way to Vienna at the urgent request of the Duke of Wellington.<sup>1</sup>

Talleyrand was genuinely anxious, as he had always been, for a better understanding between France and England. So cordial, indeed, was his attitude that Castlereagh deemed it desirable 'rather to repress the exuberance of this sentiment and to prevent its assuming a shape which, by exciting jealousy in other States, might impare (*sic*) our respective means of being really useful'.<sup>2</sup> Although nothing was, or could be, settled in Paris, these preliminary conversations between the two great diplomatists had an immense influence upon the subsequent proceedings at Vienna.

Castlereagh arrived at Vienna on September 13th;

<sup>1</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> To Liverpool, *British Diplomacy*, p. 192.

Talleyrand ten days later. The Frenchman found himself excluded from the councils of the 'Big Four', but at once set to work to cultivate intimate relations with the smaller nations, and let it be known to the autocrats of the Congress that he meant to champion their claims against 'the usurpation of the great powers'. This, as Castlereagh complained, 'gave a most unpleasant complexion to our discussions' but it produced, and very promptly, exactly the effect Talleyrand intended. On September 30th Metternich invited him to a private conference with the autocrats. He accepted, and immediately made an emphatic protest against the procedure adopted and (as Gentz reports) 'soundly rated us for two hours'. 'It was', adds the secretary, 'a scene I shall never forget'. If Talleyrand's behaviour was little short of insolent, it was calculated and it was effective. *Les Quatres* had become the 'Big Five'.

Before the 'Five' got to close grips with the difficult problems that had brought them into conference, there were long discussions about procedure. Except to professional diplomatists—perhaps even to them—those discussions are very tiresome, and they concern the biographer of Castlereagh only in one way. They illustrate Castlereagh's invariable consideration for the weaker members, and his growing opposition to the autocratic methods preferred and recommended by Prussia.

To the larger questions, then, we pass at once. The whole settlement hinged, indeed, on one question—the future of Poland. '*La question la plus exclusivement européenne est celle qui concerne la Pologne.*' So Talleyrand wrote to Metternich in 1814. Nearly a century later another Frenchman gave expression to a similar sentiment. '*La question polonaise*', wrote M. Leroy-Beaulieu, '*est essentiellement une question européenne dont aucun Européen, dont aucun Français surtout ne peut se désintéresser, car d'elle dépend l'avenir de*

l'Europe le maintien ou la ruine de ce qui reste de l'équilibre européen, la balance des pouvoirs et le sort des alliances.' Talleyrand's aphorism was true to French traditions. For more than a century Poland had been one of the hinges of French diplomacy. Napoleon I did not forget this: 'The future of Europe really depends', he wrote, 'on the ultimate destiny of Poland'. Napoleon III's neglect of this tradition (in 1863) was one of the causes contributory to the fall of the Second Empire.

But in 1815 'Poland' did not exist. Prussia, Russia and Austria had erased that ancient kingdom from the map of Europe. Burke and the Whigs denounced the partitions as a crime, but did nothing to avert or avenge it. Lord Salisbury, in 1863, wrote scornfully of Polish nationality.

Lord Castlereagh's position was midway between that of Edmund Burke and Lord Salisbury. The Czar Alexander, however, had made up his mind, and as a Russian general put it '*avec 600,000 on ne négocie beaucoup*'. Alexander, too, shortened argument by putting his hand over 'Poland' on the map and bluntly saying '*C'est à moi*'. But there still remained an arguable question: What is 'Poland'? The 'Grand Duchy of Warsaw' set up by Napoleon in 1807, even with the addition of Western Galicia snatched from Austria in 1809, was something far short of the ancient kingdom of the Poles. To the restoration of that kingdom Alexander, urged thereto by Czartoriski, had pledged himself in 1812.

Castlereagh strove earnestly for the restoration of Poland in its integrity as an independent kingdom. But he got little support. Even Talleyrand was lukewarm. The Duke of Wellington, then at his post in Paris, urged that instructions should be sent to Talleyrand to associate himself firmly with Castlereagh.<sup>1</sup> But Louis XVIII was, at the moment, more interested in the fortunes of the Neapolitan Bourbons than in the fate

<sup>1</sup> Wellington to Castlereagh, 5 November 1814; C.C., X. 183-4.

of the Poles, and consequently the whole burden of opposing the Czar's ambition fell upon the nation least interested, from the selfish point of view, in Poland. But Castlereagh was at once a British patriot and a 'good European'. He clearly perceived that a strong and independent Poland would have interposed an effective barrier between the Slavonic and the Teutonic Empires, and have offered a reliable guarantee for the maintenance of the European equilibrium.

Failing an independent Poland Castlereagh pleaded that the Poles should enjoy the largest measure of autonomy. If his success was hardly commensurate with his efforts, he so far prevailed that the first article of the Final Act of the Congress ran as follows:—

'The Duchy of Warsaw shall be irrevocably attached to [the Russian Empire] [The Czar] reserves to himself to give to this State, enjoying a distinct administration, the internal reforms which he shall judge proper. . . . The Poles, who are respectively subjects of Russia, Austria and Prussia shall obtain Representative and National Institutions regulated according to the degree of political consideration that each of the Governments to which they belong shall judge expedient. . . .'

This meant, in plain English, that Russia was to retain as integral parts of Russia all she had obtained in the three Partitions of 1772, 1793 and 1795; that the Congress Kingdom, as it came to be called, should have autonomy but under the Czar as King of Poland, while Prussia and Austria should recover so much of the spoils of 1772-95 as were not absorbed into Russia's Congress Kingdom. The settlement thus outlined was not reached until after months of bitter discussion; so bitter that at the end of the year 1814 it looked as if discussion would give place to war.

Castlereagh had throughout done his best to find a basis of agreement, but, as the sequel proved, it did

not amount to much; nor was Poland the end of the matter. Prussia had made a good bargain with the Czar. She acquired (on the Polish side) the great Duchy of Posen and the important fortresses of Thorn and Danzig, and was also to have Saxony.

That raised the whole problem of Germany. The King of Saxony, who was then a prisoner in Prussia, had, indeed, forfeited all claim to consideration by adherence to his patron Napoleon when all the rest of the German princes deserted him. But even in 1814 some regard was paid to the wishes of the people of Saxony and they were bitterly opposed to a project for handing them over to their old enemies, the Prussians. Nor could the Hapsburgs view with indifference the aggrandizement of their Hohenzollern rival. Prussia was, however, determined to get Saxony, and Castlereagh, mainly concerned to obstruct the westward advance of Russia, was disposed to concede Prussia's claim. Talleyrand, with greater foresight, insisted that if Prussia got so great an accession of adjacent territory 'she would in a few years form a militarist monarchy that would be a real menace to her neighbours'.

For three months there was a deadlock in the intertwined Polish-Saxon question, and on December 5, Castlereagh informed Liverpool that the discussions between the Great Powers may 'lead to a total stagnation and that it may suddenly end in war'.

It was not the first time that Castlereagh had hinted at this contingency, and the British Cabinet had already become seriously alarmed and repudiated the possibility of Great Britain becoming involved in war 'for any of the objects which have hitherto been under discussion at Vienna'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bathurst to Castlereagh, 27 November 1814, *British Diplomacy*, p. 247, and Liverpool to Castlereagh, 23 December. *W.S.D.*, IX. 497.

Castlereagh, however, knew that he must take risks. On December 29 Hardenberg, at a formal meeting of the Conference, threatened war, unless the claims of Prussia to the whole of Saxony were immediately recognized. Confronted with this menace Castlereagh said that if 'such a temper really prevailed . . . it were better to break up the Congress'. He did more. He immediately concerted with Metternich and Talleyrand a Treaty of Defensive Alliance which was formally (but secretly) signed on January 3 1815.<sup>1</sup> Great Britain, Austria and France agreed each to contribute 150,000 men if attacked by Prussia. Bavaria, the Netherlands, and Hanover were to be asked to join the three Powers. News of the treaty, though secret, reached the Czar and convinced him that Castlereagh was not to be trifled with. On January 5 Castlereagh was able to report to Liverpool that the 'alarm of war was over'.

He had won both at Vienna and in Whitehall. He was officially informed by Lord Bathurst (18 January 1815) that his Defensive Alliance of January 3rd was approved by the Cabinet and would be forthwith ratified. Bathurst also conveyed to Castlereagh the Prince Regent's 'entire approbation' of his 'conduct under circumstances very critical and deeply affecting the tranquillity of Europe', and the despatch proceeded: 'The spirit with which your Lordship resisted the menacing language of the Prussian minister, upheld the dignity of the Court you represent, and was well calculated to check an impetuosity, from which much might have been apprehended, had it not been so seasonably rebuked'.<sup>2</sup>

The encomium on Castlereagh was no more than he deserved. Nevertheless, Liverpool was becoming anxious

<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh to Liverpool, *British Diplomacy*, pp. 277, 279.

<sup>2</sup> *British Diplomacy*, p. 291.

at the prospect of having to meet Parliament without Castlereagh.<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh insisted that he must see the job through at Vienna. He was right; but on February 6th he had the satisfaction of being able to report that the 'territorial arrangement on this side of the Alps was settled in all its essential features'. There was still much work to be done in connection with Italy and with the future Constitution of Germany, but on February 15 Castlereagh felt justified in leaving Vienna, having confided the completion of his work to the Duke of Wellington.

In the final result Prussia had to content herself with the northern and smaller half of Saxony, containing about 850,000 inhabitants, as against 1,200,000 left to the King of Saxony, but, in addition to the Duchy of Posen with Danzig and Thorn she also obtained Swedish Pomerania and a large province (Rhenish Prussia) on both sides of the Rhine, including the Duchies of Westphalia, Cleves and Berg, the secularized Episcopal Electorates of Köln, Trier and Aachen, the Bishopric of Munster, and strips of Limburg and Luxemburg. Prussia had to surrender Anspach and Bayreuth to Bavaria, and Hildesheim and East Friesland to Hanover, but the promise given to Prussia in the Treaty of Kalisch was abundantly redeemed: in extent of territory and in population she was in a better position than before Tilsit, and with far greater political possibilities. Little as Prussia or Europe realized it at the moment, the year 1815 was the turning-point in the fortunes not only of Prussia but of Germany. The victories and acquisitions of 1866 and 1871 were implicit in the new position acquired by the Hohenzollerns in 1815.

Not, however, until June was the work of the Congress completed. After that, it had to be supplemented

<sup>1</sup> 16 January 1815 (*British Diplomacy*, p. 290).



by the Second Treaty of Paris concluded on November 20 1815. That treaty was necessitated by the episode known as 'The Hundred Days'.

In that episode the leading part fell, of course, not to Castlereagh but to the great soldier who had succeeded him at Vienna.

On March 7th news reached Vienna that Napoleon, tiring of his constricted sovereignty, had left Elba and landed in France, and without firing a shot had marched straight on Paris. Louis XVIII and the Princes left the capital on March 19th; on the 20th, Napoleon entered it amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the people. The allies promptly declared that Napoleon 'by appearing again in France with projects of confusion and disorder . . . had placed himself without the pale of Civil and Social relations, and had rendered himself liable to public vengeance as an enemy and disturber of the tranquillity of the world.'<sup>1</sup> They also promptly renewed the Treaty of Chaumont and pledged themselves to keep their armies in the field 'until Buonaparte should have been rendered incapable of giving further trouble' (25 March). At the end of the month Wellington left Vienna, to take command of the mixed force which the British Government was organizing in the Netherlands. He reached Brussels on April 4th. Having vainly attempted to induce the allies to negotiate, Napoleon left Paris on June 12, was heavily defeated by Wellington and Blücher at Waterloo on the 18th, abdicated the throne in favour of his son on the 22nd, and then made his way to Rochefort, with the intent to escape to America. Failing to elude the vigilance of the British fleet he surrendered to Admiral Hotham of H.M.S. *Bellerophon* on July 15 and was deported to St. Helena, where he died in 1821. The allies had, meanwhile, entered Paris bringing Louis XVIII with them 'in

<sup>1</sup> Text in *P.D.*, xxx. 374.

their baggage wagons'. Much still remained to be settled, but the episode of the Hundred Days was at an end. Byron's atrabilious comment, on receiving the news of Waterloo is a measure of the chagrin caused to the less patriotic of Castlereagh's enemies by the brilliant success of his policy. 'I'm damned sorry for it', exclaimed Byron and, then, after a pause, he added: 'I didn't know but I might live to see Lord Castlereagh's head on a pole. But I suppose I shan't now.'<sup>1</sup>

To Thomas Moore he wrote a few days later (7 July 1815), 'the luck which Providence is pleased to lavish on Lord Castlereagh is only a proof of the little value the gods set upon posterity, when they permit such —s as he and that drunken corporal old Blücher to bully their betters. From this, however, Wellington should be excepted. He is a man.'<sup>2</sup>

But the exception made in favour of Wellington was only temporary:

'The miscreant Wellington is the Cub of Fortune, but she will never lick him into shape. . . . Victory was never before wasted upon such an unprofitable soil as this dunghill of Tyranny whence nothing springs but viper's eggs.' So Byron wrote a few years later.<sup>3</sup>

The re-entry of the allies into Paris necessitated Castlereagh's presence, and he joined his colleagues there on July 7th. His stay in England had barely exceeded four months, but during these months he had been continuously busy in the House of Commons.

Parliament had met for the new Session on February 9, 1815; but the temper of the Opposition had been so

<sup>1</sup> Quoted *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, II. 324, from Tickner's *Life*, vol. I, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Journals*, III. 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Detached Thoughts* (1821).

clearly manifested in the preceding autumn Session that Lord Liverpool wrote letter after letter to Castlereagh urging him to return to London in time for the re-opening of Parliament. 'The Opposition', he wrote, 'are particularly rancorous and evidently mean to find us good employment' (18 November 1814). To Canning, who had gone as Ambassador to Lisbon, and to Wellington in Paris, he wrote in a similar strain: 'I have not seen for several years so much party animosity as appeared during the three weeks of November while Parliament was sitting' (28 December 1814). The Government Bench in the House of Commons was lamentably weak. 'Our friends *en première ligne* have proved themselves not equal to the burden', but some of the younger ministers 'have gained great credit, particularly Peel'. So the Prime Minister wrote to Castlereagh on January 12. And again within a week: 'It is absolutely necessary that you should be here as soon as possible after the meeting of Parliament. This is the unanimous opinion of all my colleagues. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Castlereagh hoped that the conclusion of peace with America might ease matters. Lord Liverpool was less sanguine, and insisted that Castlereagh must come home. Evidently he was indispensable alike at Vienna and at Westminster: not to add in Paris, which he visited on his return journey with the object of accommodating Bourbon claims in Italy.

On March 3 Castlereagh landed at Dover where he was welcomed by immense crowds with wild enthusiasm. Hardly less enthusiastic was the welcome which awaited him in the House of Commons. The whole House rose spontaneously and cheered to the echo the man who with rare dignity and firmness had represented his country in the Councils of Europe.

'Never perhaps', wrote one of the most representative

<sup>1</sup> C.C., X. 239-41.

papers of the day, 'was a man charged with a more delicate and important mission or possessed more advantages for executing it. With consummate ability he combines all the graces of the most exquisite politeness. Moderate, but firm, he conceives laudable projects only, and executes them by honourable means. He is a statesman without guile, a courtier without falsehood; such a man is a glory to his country; and if England is proud of a Nelson, of a Wellington, so ought she to be of having provided a Castlereagh.'<sup>1</sup> That is not the journalistic style of to-day; but the eulogy, if somewhat extravagantly expressed, was in substance well deserved.

The Party truce did not, however, last many minutes. The Opposition quickly justified Liverpool's apprehensions. The attack had begun before Castlereagh's return but was now pressed with redoubled energy and ingenuity. Most of the previous month had been occupied with debates on the Corn Laws, and with questions of Finance, notably the question as to the renewal of the Property Tax—that 'inquisitorial and oppressive tax' as Whitbread described it. There had, too, been serious rioting in the Metropolis; the mob marched on Westminster and the approaches to the House had to be kept open by soldiers. Castlereagh had hardly resumed his place when he was bombarded with questions. One indignant member complained that he had found it difficult to reach the House. Another wanted to know why soldiers had been employed to infuriate peaceful demonstrators—and so on in the familiar Parliamentary mode. 'Our riots, which are a good deal exaggerated in the public press, are subsiding and never were, I think, at all serious.' So Croker wrote to Canning on March 13.<sup>2</sup> But any stick is good enough wherewith to beat ministers, and with

<sup>1</sup> Quoted C.C., I. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Croker Papers*, I. 59.

## OPPOSITION CRITICS

the Home Secretary (Sidmouth) in the Lords the defence of the Executive fell to Castlereagh. But it was, naturally, on Foreign Affairs that Opposition critics chiefly concentrated in their attacks on the Government, and in repelling them Castlereagh was busy during the four remaining months of the Session. The Opposition had made merry over poor Vansittart's unwillingness or inability to give information about proceedings at Vienna in the absence of Castlereagh. But Whitbread and his friends refused to await the return, though announced as imminent, of the Foreign Secretary. More particularly were they anxious to have information about the transfer of Genoa to the Kingdom of Sardinia, and long debates had taken place on the subject on February 13 and again on the 21st. 'What!' exclaimed Whitbread, 'was the country in which the palladium of liberty was supposed to have remained inviolate, that had been described as the ark of a deluged universe, to be made a party to the extinction of an independent power, and to the compulsory transfer of a free people to a Government equally imbecile and corrupt'. The conduct of British ministers he denounced as a 'compound of folly and profligacy'. Nor was it only in Parliament that indignation was expressed at the annexation of Genoa to Piedmont. Byron declared that the Italians execrated Castlerighi, as the betrayer of Genoa:—

'Surely', he wrote to John Murray, 'that man will not die in his bed: there is no spot on earth where his name is not a hissing and a curse. Imagine what must be the man's talent for odium, who has continued to spread his infamy like a pestilence from Ireland to Italy, and to make his name an execration in all languages.'<sup>1</sup>

Prose did not suffice for the expression of Byron's

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Journals*, V. 22.

feelings. Thus in the Dedication to Canto XIV of *Don Juan* he wrote:

A bungler even in its disgusting trade,  
 And botching, patching, leaving still behind  
 Something of which its masters are afraid—  
 States to be curbed, and thoughts to be confined,  
 Conspiracy or Congress to be made—  
 Cobbling at manacles for all mankind—  
 A tinkering slave maker, who mends old chains,  
 With God and man's abhorrence for its gains.

The edge of parliamentary invective was by no means turned by the arrival of Castlereagh, and it was in answer to an elaborate impeachment launched by Whitbread on March 20 that Castlereagh made his famous defence of his work at Vienna. The entry in the Speaker's diary is: 'Whitbread moved for information on the Congress proceedings at Vienna, in a speech of two hours: answered by Lord Castlereagh in a speech of four hours. The motion for an address for information was agreed to.'<sup>1</sup> For the moment that brief entry must suffice, since we must needs assent to Castlereagh's plea that the time had not yet come, with Napoleon again in France, for passing considered judgement on recent events. Nor can we withhold sympathy from his complaint of Whitbread's impatience and pertinacity. 'Really', he exclaimed, 'the nature of the hon. gentleman's questions, their number and his mode of presenting them are without parallel in the history of Parliament.'<sup>2</sup> The columns of 'Hansard' justify the complaint.

News of Napoleon's landing in France had reached England ten days before the debate of March 20th. The news split the Opposition. 'Here', wrote Mr. H. G. Bennet, M.P., to Mr. Creevey (at Brussels), 'we

<sup>1</sup> Colchester: *Diary*, II. 534; *P.D.*, xxx. 265-305.

<sup>2</sup> *P.D.*, xxx. 468.

## THE FINAL VICTORY

are certainly for war.' 'Lord Grenville started furious for war . . . Elliot and Wynnes and that wise statesman Fremantle are more hot, and the former holds as a doctrine of salvation that the existence of the French power with Napoleon at the head, is incompatible with the safety of Europe'. 'Grey is anxious for peace . . . Lord Spencer, the Carringtons &c. are for peace . . . Prinny, of course, is for war.'<sup>1</sup>

The British Government was as cautious in 1815 as they had been in 1814 against committing themselves to the cause of the Bourbons, but were even more determined on the overthrow of the 'public enemy'.

Castlereagh's task in the House of Commons was thus exceptionally delicate and difficult. The Opposition had a good debating case: they could expose the folly of ever allowing Napoleon to reign at Elba; they could blame the British fleet for permitting him to leave it, and they did, but without justification, denounce the Allied Declaration of March 13 as a 'direct incitement to assassination'. At heart Castlereagh had a good deal of sympathy with the contention of his opponents. He had from the first disapproved of providing Napoleon with so convenient a refuge as Elba, nor did he like the language employed by the allies in the Declaration of March 13. But on the main point he was firm, and carried the House and the nation with him. The Prince Regent's message recommending 'the augmentation of His Majesty's land and sea forces', and a renewed co-operation with the allies to 'provide for the general and permanent security of Europe' was debated in both Houses on April 7. In asking the House to accede to the recommendations of the Executive Castlereagh, while expressing his abhorrence of a renewal of war, could not deny that the precautionary

<sup>1</sup> *Creevey Papers*, I. 213-14.

measures he suggested might be followed by that catastrophe. Still the contingency had to be faced. Ponsonby agreed. Whitbread did not, but on a division was defeated by 220 votes to 37.

Once more Castlereagh had proved himself to be truly representative of the opinion of his countrymen.

The next moves in the game were in the hands of Wellington. When the great soldier's work was done Castlereagh joined him in Paris.

Four months were spent in negotiating a new treaty with France which was ultimately signed on November 20. In the meantime Castlereagh and Wellington were mainly concerned to restrain their allies. The Prussian soldiers behaved with a wanton brutality still bitterly recalled in Paris. Prussian statesmen demanded territorial compensations on the North-eastern frontier of France, the 'restoration' of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, and a huge indemnity in cash. In England, at Court, in the Cabinet, and in the country, there was a strong feeling that France, so tenderly treated in 1814, had now proved herself the accomplice in crime of the Corsican brigand, and deserved condign punishment. Some punishment she must evidently expect, but Castlereagh was less intent on punishing France than on ensuring the stability of the structure he hoped to erect for Europe as a whole. The Czar's inclinations were in the same direction. Castlereagh and Alexander prevailed, and the Second Treaty of Paris, though necessarily less lenient to France than the First, was still framed in a spirit of moderation. France had to surrender some fortresses to Rhenish Prussia, a strip of frontier to the Netherlands, part of Savoy to Piedmont; she had to disgorge the stolen art treasures retained in 1814; to pay an indemnity of 700,000,000 francs; to satisfy private claims for injuries inflicted by French armies to an amount ultimately assessed at 240,000,000



## THE PEACE SETTLEMENT

francs; and to leave, as a pledge of payment and good behaviour, eighteen of her frontier fortresses in the hands of the allies for five years. An army of occupation of 150,000 men was placed under the command of the Duke of Wellington. On his advice, and with the help of foreign financiers who lent France money to clear off the indemnities, the period of occupation was ultimately shortened to three years.

Such was the moderate chastisement inflicted on France who, thanks mainly to Wellington, was allowed to retain Alsace-Lorraine. If, said the great English soldier, you want peace in Europe, don't inflict on France a dismemberment which will provoke her to a renewal of war.

Never was the common sense of Wellington, never was the mediatorial temper of Castlereagh, displayed more conspicuously, or with greater advantage to the security of Europe.

The Congress of Vienna, uninterrupted by the 'Hundred Days' concluded its labours by the end of May, and on June 9 the Final Act of the Congress was signed. It remains only to indicate in brief outline the main features of the settlement of 1814-15.

The position of Russia, Poland, and Prussia has been already described. Castlereagh's favourite scheme for a strong barrier between France and Germany was realized by the union of Belgium and Holland and the creation of a Kingdom of the Netherlands under the House of Orange. The union did not endure nor did the King marry the heiress presumptive to the British Crown. But Castlereagh can hardly be held responsible for either failure. The Princess Charlotte declined to accept dictation in the choice of a husband: a little more tact on the part of the Hague might have prolonged, if not perpetuated, the union of the Netherlands, and might have averted the tragedy of 1914. Austria was

more than compensated for the loss of Belgium by the recovery or acquisition of Eastern Galicia, Salzburg, the Tyrol and the Vorarlberg, the Illyrian Provinces, Venetia and Lombardy. The aggrandizement of Austria in North Italy was resented by the English Whigs, but not nearly so much as the annexation of Genoa to Sardinia.

The problem of Genoa was, indeed, one of the most difficult and most characteristic of the problems presented to the diplomatists of 1815. Lord William Bentinck had undeniably promised to the Genoese, the restoration of their independence, together with Representative institutions. The Whigs urged the fulfilment of the promises. Bentinck had probably exceeded his authority. But, be that as it may, who can deny that the union of Genoa with Sardinia was an important step towards the unification and emancipation of Italy under the House of Savoy—the consummation so ardently desired and so materially assisted by the Whigs of the next generation?

Another Italian question caused much searching of heart. Castlereagh's English critics waxed as wroth about the treatment of Murat, King of Naples, as about the annihilation of the Genoese Republic. Metternich had agreed to allow Murat to retain the throne of Naples as the price of his desertion from Napoleon (January 1814). Even Castlereagh had condescended to conclude an armistice with 'the person exercising the Government of Naples' though he characteristically and pointedly refrained from recognizing that person's title to the throne. Murat proved as faithless to his new friends as to his old master, but when, after Napoleon's escape from Elba, Murat offered his help to the ex-Emperor, it was contemptuously declined. Ferdinand was restored to the throne of Naples by an Austrian army, to the delight of Talleyrand and the French

Bourbons, but to the chagrin of the English Whigs, who witnessed with indignation the establishment of Austrian ascendancy in Italy from the Brenner Pass to the Straits of Messina. The day of Italian unity and independence had not yet dawned.<sup>1</sup>

Still less had the day of German unity. The settlement of Germany was referred at Vienna to a special German Committee from whose labours there emerged the Germanic Confederation which subsisted, under the Presidency of Austria, until the Prussian victory at Sadowa in 1866. Castlereagh would have been glad to see a more closely united Germany as contributing to the continental equilibrium that he so ardently desired. England had not, however, the same interest in Germany that she had in the Netherlands, nor, indeed, was any part of the territorial settlement of such genuine and profound concern to her as the movement, purely altruistic and humanitarian, for the abolition of the Slave Trade.

The colonial settlement has been already discussed. Heligoland, Malta, and a Protectorate over the Ionian isles, were the only territorial acquisitions in Europe which Great Britain could show for her vast sacrifices in men and money. Nor did she seek any other. Castlereagh, as already indicated, was vigilant in the protection and advancement of her interests, both Imperial and European, but as regards Europe he believed those interests to lie in the general security of the Continent, and to promote that security his efforts were mainly directed. In that reconstructive work few of his fellow countrymen, not many perhaps of his colleagues, manifested any keen or continuous interest. That 'Boney' should be soundly beaten was the universal

<sup>1</sup> For details of the Italian settlement cf. Marriott: *Makers of Modern Italy*, pp. 37-42; for the German settlement, Marriott and Robertson: *Evolution of Prussia*, c. viii.

prayer; the man who beat him in Spain and Belgium became a national hero. The man who contributed so so largely to rebuilding the edifice Napoleon had shattered, did not.

The one thing on which the mind of Parliament and the country was set was the abolition of the Slave Trade. Great Britain had herself abolished the trade in 1807, and her capture of French and Dutch colonies had gone far to extinguish it throughout the East and West Indies. The Peace negotiations at Paris and Vienna evidently offered a unique opportunity for universal abolition. Sweden had pledged herself never to engage in the trade; Denmark had abolished it. Spain and Portugal alone presented any difficulty and as Wilberforce wrote, 'they may surely be compelled into assent'.<sup>1</sup> Macaulay, who in May 1814 was sent to represent the British Abolitionists in Paris, was instructed to impress upon Castlereagh that not a single colony taken from any power by Great Britain ought to be restored save on the express 'condition that no African slaves should be imported into it'.<sup>2</sup>

Parliamentary statesmen welcome stimuli to their predetermined policy. Castlereagh in this matter needed none. Ever since his accession to the Foreign Office he had been set upon abolition. Yet, despite what he had done at Châtillon and in Paris, the more ardent Abolitionists had, as we have seen, suspected him of lukewarmness and minimized his actual achievements. In the First Treaty of Paris he had gone as far as he deemed prudent. When the Sovereigns were in London Wilberforce had interviewed the Czar who cordially agreed 'We must keep them to it'.

At Vienna Castlereagh kept them to it, and in Annexe XV to the Final Act obtained the assent of the Eight Powers to a declaration in favour of general abolition,

<sup>1</sup> Wilberforce: *Life*, IV. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 184.

## THE SLAVE TRADE

though the delegates were unable to pledge their respective Courts to a particular date.

Some modern critics have been quick to disparage the value of the concession made to Castlereagh in this regard.<sup>1</sup> Wilberforce's entry in his Diary is, however, sufficient commentary on the measure of Castlereagh's success: 'March 8th—Called on Castlereagh by appointment. . . . I believe all done that could be done.'<sup>2</sup> On July 31st 1815 Castlereagh wrote to Wilberforce from Paris:

'I have the pleasure of acquainting you that the long desired object is accomplished . . . the unqualified and total abolition of the Slave Trade throughout the dominions of France.' An 'additional article' of the Treaty of Paris went even further. France bound herself without loss of time to concert with Great Britain 'the most effectual measures for the entire and effective abolition of a commerce so odious and so strongly condemned by the laws of religion and nature'.

It is a melancholy reflection upon the impotence of statesmanship when confronted by cupidity that the measures foreshadowed were only partially successful. The subject was again raised by Castlereagh at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle (1818), and treaties were concluded between Great Britain on the one side, and Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands on the other, by which, in return for large money compensation to be paid by Great Britain, these powers agreed to absolute and complete abolition as from May 30th 1820. Nevertheless, owing to the jealousy of British sea-power and refusal to permit the 'right of search' the odious traffic continued under cover of neutral flags, particularly the flag of the United States. But Castlereagh persisted. Almost the last words he ever wrote instructed the

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Temperley: *Life of Canning*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Life*, IV. 244.

Duke of Wellington, who was to represent him at the Congress of Verona (1822), to press the allies to treat the carrying of slaves as piracy, or to promise to declare an economic boycott against any goods produced in the colonies by slave labour.

To return to 1815. The statesmen who concluded the treaties of 1814-15 suffered severely at the hands both of contemporary critics and in historical retrospect. They were accused of complete indifference to political idealism, of having ignored the beneficent forces liberated by the French Revolution, neglected the interests of the peoples immediately affected by territorial readjustments, heeded only the wishes of autocrats and the claims of dynasties, repressed all liberal tendencies and contemned the emergent spirit of nationality. Such criticism was loudest in England, and was directed mainly against Lord Castlereagh. It persisted for a century, but has been greatly modified since 1919. Nor was it ever, in its extreme form, justified.

In mitigation of sentence two considerations may be urged. The hands of the negotiators were not free. They were tied by treaties concluded before they met at Vienna or even at Paris. By the Treaty of Åbo (1812) Norway was promised to Sweden; to Prussia and Austria had been guaranteed by the Treaties of Kalisch and Töplitz (1813) a restoration of the territorial position enjoyed by them respectively before 1805; Bavaria was to retain the full sovereign rights and most of the territory acquired through Napoleon, and the members of the Rhenish Confederation their independence. Joachim Murat had received from Austria a promise of Naples, and but for his own double-dealing the allies would have found it difficult to evade the fulfilment of an ill-considered promise. As it was, the breach of faith constituted one of the many charges preferred by the

#### CASTLEREAGH'S ACHIEVEMENT

Whigs against Castlereagh in the debates on the 'Treaties in the English Parliament.

Thus the diplomatists, though charged with the rebuilding of the European structure, had to rebuild on old and encumbered sites, and largely with old materials. Nor must it be forgotten that their primary concern was with the stability of the structure. After twenty-five years of war, Europe wanted peace. She secured it. Detached portions of the structure proved unstable; but the structure as a whole weathered many storms; the general peace was not broken for a century. This was an achievement which the present generation is better able to appreciate than the generations that intervened between the Treaties of Vienna and the Treaties of Versailles.

For that achievement the largest share of credit must indubitably be given to Lord Castlereagh.

## CHAPTER XVII

### POST-WAR ENGLAND—SOCIAL UNREST— CASTLEREAGH'S WORK

To vindicate the sagacity of Castlereagh's foreign policy has become, in these latter days, superfluous. In regard to the domestic administration for which, together with Sidmouth, Castlereagh was held mainly responsible, it is very different. 'Social war of the Haves against the Have-nots was Castlereagh's programme for the nineteenth century. . . . Recent historical research has done much for Castlereagh's reputation as a Foreign Minister, but less than nothing to justify the domestic policy for which he made himself personally responsible by introducing the Six Acts into the House of Commons.'<sup>1</sup> Mr. Trevelyan undoubtedly represents a widely prevalent opinion. Even Lord Salisbury, as already indicated, recommends the prudent panegyrist to confine himself to the record of Castlereagh's foreign policy. But the biographer can hardly decline, in the case of Castlereagh, a task which Lord Salisbury himself accepted in the case of Castlereagh's master. Lord Salisbury made a spirited defence of Pitt's domestic policy against the bitter invective of Lord Macaulay. Conditions in England during the post-war years were not precisely parallel with those which prevailed in the early years of the French Revolution. Far otherwise. Yet it is arguable that the situation which confronted Castlereagh and Lord Liverpool was intrinsically more menacing than the situation that evoked and, in Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill*, p. 181.



Salisbury's opinion, justified the repressive legislation of Dundas and Pitt.

The delusion persists that war brings peace. It does not. War evokes some of the noblest qualities of man: but the cessation of arms seems calculated to release passions which may for a time have been dormant, or more profitably directed. Moreover, war inevitably involves economic waste on a gigantic scale, and on a scale steadily increasing with every development in modern industry. The waste has to be repaired, and the process is necessarily painful. Those who have contributed to victory by more or less cheerful acceptance of the burden of war taxation nurse a grievance if not relieved of the burden directly peace is signed. Peace also involves a slump in those industries which are artificially stimulated by war and still more notably in agriculture. This in turn results in a diminution of the profits out of which taxes can be paid, and a sudden contraction of employment simultaneous with an equally sudden increase in the supply of labour. Currency fluctuations, too, though at all times disturbing to trade, are more painfully felt when times are bad than when trade is stimulated, artificially or genuinely, by the demand created by the requirements of great armies in the field.

All these phenomena, painfully familiar to those who have witnessed the economic aftermath of the World-War, revealed themselves not less painfully to the men and women of Castlereagh's generation. In some respects the phenomena were more lurid, the situation was even more grave in 1815 than in 1918. True, indeed, is it that the Napoleonic wars, though much more prolonged than the struggle against Germany, affected the national life less acutely. The earlier wars were wars of soldiers and sailors: in the later almost the whole population, male and female, was engaged.

Consequently in 1918-19 it was not armies and navies but the nation that had to be demobilized. Moreover, the post-war period after Waterloo was differentiated from the later one by two other considerations of first-rate significance.

The Napoleonic wars were coincident with changes in industry and agriculture so fundamental that the 'Industrial Revolution' and the 'Agrarian Revolution' have passed into the common currency of historical criticism. The old economic order which had persisted for centuries disappeared in the course of a single generation. A country which had been a land of sheepfolds and open fields, of small market towns and country villages, was suddenly transformed into a land of enclosed farms, of factory towns, of shipyards and collieries.

Until these revolutions took place a relatively small proportion of the population was wholly dependent on weekly wages, and the problem of unemployment was almost negligible. Trade if small was steady: 'booms' and 'slumps' were as little known in fact as they were in terms to Dr. Johnson's generation.

Several things combined to revolutionize the old order: mechanical inventions; the consequent concentration of industry in factories; of factories in towns; the rapid progress of enclosures which extinguished (not without compensation) rights of 'common'; the gradual disappearance from farm and cottage of the handloom and the spinning wheel, and a sharp bifurcation between agriculture and industry.

Another feature of the situation in 1815 was of primary significance. The outbreak of the French Revolution had postponed for a quarter of a century all consideration of the problem of constitutional reform. As far back as 1780 the *Society for Constitutional Reform* had anticipated the six points of the Charter, including

universal suffrage and equal electoral districts. Parliamentary reform, if prematurely demanded in 1780, was certainly overdue in 1815. In the interval, a new England had come into being and that new England was wholly unrepresented in Parliament. The Parliament which was dissolved in 1918 had, on the contrary, been far from infertile in legislation, and in particular it had passed the most sweeping and most radical Reform Bill in English history.

Never since the days of Wilkes and the Middlesex election had the Whigs allowed the question of Parliamentary Reform to slumber: motions in favour of it were periodically proposed in Parliament, only to be consistently rejected. It was not, however, until the Industrial Revolution had changed the face of England, until population had shifted from the south to the north, from the agricultural village to the factory town, that the anomalies of the old electoral system acquired real substance.

Had Castlereagh and Liverpool been quicker to apprehend the significance of economic changes the Reform Bill of 1832 might have been antedated by fifteen years: but how little the Whigs themselves apprehended it is clear from the fact that Chartism, as embodied in the six points, was the product of disappointment with the Act of 1832. Economic causes were, in fact, far more responsible for the grievances of the Chartists than they themselves realized. The appeal of Thomas Cooper to his fellow Chartists to refrain from support of the Anti-Corn Law agitation was, in this connection, immensely significant: 'If you give up your agitation for the Charter to help the Free Traders they will not help you to get the Charter. Don't be deceived by the middle-class again. You helped them to get their votes, but where are the fine promises they made to you? Cheap bread they cry; they want low wages.

... They want to get the Corn Laws repealed not for your benefit but for their own.'

Such was the situation with which Castlereagh and his colleagues were confronted. In retrospect an accurate analysis of economic and political conditions is comparatively simple. It was not so easy for contemporaries, and it is, therefore, grotesquely unfair to charge Castlereagh with blindness and stupidity, in that he failed to see events in a perspective which even historians have but gradually appreciated.

Moreover, Castlereagh was not only occupied with urgent matters in his own Department but was compelled to deal, as leader of the House of Commons, with a great variety of questions on which an active and vigilant Opposition demanded information and reassurance.

For example. No fewer than five of Castlereagh's speeches—most of them brief—in the first week of the Session (1–5 February 1816) were devoted to the vexed question of the most suitable monuments to commemorate the victories of Waterloo and Trafalgar.

Very frequently, too, Castlereagh had to come to the help of Vansittart on the Budget, on questions of national expenditure, in defending the Army and Navy Estimates, on the greatly agitated question of the Property Tax, and the like. Many of these matters were of merely temporary significance, but interest in the proposal for a Committee to consider the relations between the Government and the Bank of England is not yet exhausted. Mr. Grenfell proposed it in a speech which fills nearly fifty columns of the Parliamentary Debates; Castlereagh in resisting the motion occupied little more than one; but the House supported him by 81 votes against 44. It again supported the Government—without a division—when the specific resolutions were put to the House on March 14.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P.D., xxxii. 458; xxxiii. 264.

Similar unanimity prevailed on the question of a suitable provision for the Princess Charlotte on her marriage with Prince Leopold of Coburg and Saarfeld. Castlereagh complained, not unjustly, that Brougham had incongruously mixed 'the supposition of incapacity of the Prince Regent' with a provision for his daughter, but even the Whigs showed no disposition to visit the sins of the man who had betrayed his Whig friends upon the daughter who might some day make reparation for them.<sup>1</sup> Parliament voted £60,000 for the Princess's trousseau, and settled £60,000 a year on her. In view of the fact that her obstinacy had foiled Castlereagh's favourite project, this was a generous provision. The Princess's choice of Prince Leopold was, indeed, popular, though Castlereagh tactfully dissuaded the Regent from conferring a Dukedom on the Prince. To make the Prince Consort a member of the Legislature seemed to Castlereagh and Speaker Abbott to invite complications that in the Prince's own interest, no less than that of the public, were much better avoided.<sup>2</sup>

A much smaller matter connected with the Prince Regent is so characteristic of the House of Commons as to deserve a passing reference. The Opposition wanted to know whether it was true that a statue had been erected at Rome to Cardinal York, and if so, by whom it was ordered, and who was to pay for it. Castlereagh duly explained that the Cardinal had long been 'an object of His Majesty's bounty', out of his privy purse, but that the monument was to be paid for 'out of the surplus of the contribution by the French Government for the removal from Paris to Rome of the statues which belonged to that city'. On another occasion Lord Castlereagh, as tartly as any modern minister, observed that 'the system of putting those species of questions was incompatible with the ancient

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxxiii. 259, 378.

<sup>2</sup> Colchester: *Diary*, II. 570.

usage of Parliament and to those practices which had been so long and so properly observed. He was satisfied that they only tended to embarrass and not to facilitate public business'. Questions and answers show how little, despite half a dozen Reform Acts, the House of Commons has changed in the course of a century!

The centre of interest in these post-war years must be sought, however, not in Parliament and its proceedings, but in the mass of unrepresented people outside it, in their manifestations of discontent with the social and economic conditions that prevailed in the country at large.

Violent fluctuations of prices threatened both industry and agriculture with ruin. Reports received by the Board of Agriculture in response to inquiries made in 1816 attest the severity of the crisis in what was still the most important of British industries. In order to help agriculturists Parliament had in 1815 prohibited, not without strong protests from the Whigs, the importation of wheat so long as the price was under 80s. a quarter. This afforded no relief when, as in the spring of 1816, the price fell to 52s. 6d. The harvest of 1816 was a complete failure, by December the price had risen to 103s., and by the middle of 1817 to 116s. Agriculture had thus become a mere gamble. Substantial farmers, to say nothing of their labourers, were becoming Parish paupers: credit was collapsing; banks, in all directions, were failing.

Things were no better in industry. The export trade fell away; home demand slackened; production was paralysed; thousands of wage earners, notably in the iron and coal trades, were thrown out of work.

Disorder followed on distress. Hungry men do not reason. Because bread was at famine prices wheat ricks were fired. Because work was slack machinery was smashed. During the winter of 1816-17 reports

## DISTRESS AND DISORDER

of violence and crime came in from all parts of the country.

The agitation was not exclusively economic. A loud demand arose for Parliamentary reform. Mobs demonstrated in Spa Fields: the Corporation of London addressed the Prince Regent and begged him, in view of distress which has 'become insupportable', to urge Parliament to take measures 'for making every practicable reduction in the public expenditure and restoring to the people their just share and weight in the Legislature.

Parliament met in 1817 at an unusually early date. The Prince Regent opened it in person; but as the Speaker notes in his Diary, 'no guns were fired as usual to announce his arrival at the House of Lords.' Notwithstanding the omission 'he delivered [his speech] with great spirit'. On his return, however, shots were fired and stones flung at his carriage.

The Speech referred to 'the attempts which had been made to take advantage of the distresses of the country for the purpose of exciting a spirit of sedition'. That was the aspect of the situation seen by ministers. William Cobbett and his friends saw another: agitation was the product of distress. On either view the situation was serious. Secret Committees of both Houses were at once appointed to investigate it. On February 7th Castlereagh announced that the Regent had spontaneously renounced £50,000 out of the £260,000 which formed 'the personal part of his Civil List', and proposed a 10 per cent. cut off ministerial salaries and all official incomes over £1,000 a year.

The Secret Committees presented their Reports on February 17th and 18th. They found that there was clear evidence of a deliberately planned revolutionary movement, not only in London, but in the manufacturing towns and even in the villages. They deplored the

dissemination of inflammatory publications which not only demanded political reform of the most extreme character, but aimed at 'the plunder and division of all property'; which taught that 'the landowner was a monster to be hunted down', and that worse than the landowners were the fundholders, 'rapacious creatures who take from the people 15*d.* out of every quartern loaf'.

The Government at once brought forward a series of Bills to suspend the *Habeas Corpus* Act (for four months), to prohibit secret societies and seditious meetings, to punish attempts to seduce soldiers and sailors from their allegiance, and to provide for the security of the Regent's person. Most of the Bills were temporary; some were merely consolidation of Pitt's legislation of 1795 and 1799. Castlereagh, in moving for the introduction of the Bills (24 February) made a powerful and pathetic appeal. Never had he been called upon to perform 'a more painful duty', but an antidote must be applied to the poison disseminated by men of culture and ability among large classes of persons at once ignorant and suffering; the secret societies are communistic in character; their programmes are based on the principle of plunder and spoliation; the Reports of the Committees, composed of men of all parties, were unanimous, and Castlereagh begged the Houses to give to the Executive without delay the powers for which they asked. The Radicals, headed by Burdett and Brougham, opposed the Bills at every stage, but they were quickly passed by overwhelming majorities.

The Acts were at once enforced, but it was some months before there was any notable improvement in the situation. Great meetings had been organized at Manchester in March, and the workmen, dispersed by the police, set out, each carrying a blanket, to march



to London. The march of the 'blanketeers' was arrested before the men had got far, but in June disturbances occurred in the Midlands, so serious that Parliament renewed the Suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act for a further period. The harvest of 1817 was, however, a great improvement on that of 1816; wheat fell from 116s. to 82s.; and a measure of confidence was restored. Not least, in Castlereagh's opinion, by the further postponement of the resumption of cash payments to 1819. Again and again Castlereagh had given proof of his belief in the efficacy of a paper currency under proper control. He gave effect to it again in 1817. The subject still excites controversy even among experts. On two other financial measures opinion is now almost unanimous in favour of Castlereagh. Despite the clamour raised in 1816 against the continuance of the Property Tax Castlereagh fought valiantly though vainly for its retention, if only at a reduced rate. In so fighting he braved, and incurred, great unpopularity, alike in his own Party and among his opponents. He was more successful, but not more popular, in the support he gave to Vansittart in his decision to retain the sinking fund.

So marked was the improvement that Castlereagh felt justified in finding £400,000 to compensate Spain for the final abolition of the Slave Trade, and £1,000,000 to build new churches in England. Castlereagh's heart was set on more adequate provision for religious teaching, and to save the Bill from the threatened opposition, agreed to give the right of nominating the minister to any twelve or more persons who combined to erect new churches or chapels.

Parliament was dissolved in 1818 and the resulting election manifested a healthy revival of interest in Parliament and Party politics. In 1812 only two county constituencies in England were contested. In

1818 there were in all over one hundred contests. A great fight in Westminster resulted in the return of Sir Francis Burdett and Sir Samuel Romilly, and the Opposition gained, in all, about thirty votes. But this was not enough to make any real impression on the Tory majority.

In the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the new Parliament the Regent could describe the trade of the country as 'in a most flourishing condition'. The improvement suggested a reopening of the currency question. Sydney Smith wittily complained that 'he got nothing now in Town but soup and bullion'. A Bullion Committee, with young Sir Robert Peel as chairman, in 1819 recommended a return to cash payments in 1823. Castlereagh strongly opposed in Cabinet the adoption of the Report, but being in a small minority was forced to acknowledge defeat. He had, moreover, the mortification of living to witness Peel's triumph. So strong was the position of the Bank that it resumed cash payments on May 1st 1821, two years before the stipulated date.

The complacency expressed by the Government at the beginning of 1819 proved, however, to be premature. The marked improvement of 1818 was not maintained. Heavy clouds again gathered on the commercial horizon in 1819. Employment contracted, wages fell, bankruptcies multiplied. Renewed agitation again followed closely on the recurrence of distress. In May 30,000 men met at Glasgow to demand reform and relief. On August 16 a great meeting was held in St. Peter's Fields, then on the outskirts, now in the heart, of Manchester. Working men came together to the number of 60,000 from all the adjacent districts, carrying their banners inscribed 'No Corn Laws', 'Annual Parliaments', 'Universal Suffrage'. 'Orator' Hunt, a leading demagogue of the day, was to preside,

but hardly had he mounted the hustings when the magistrates assembled in a house near by ordered the police to arrest him. The police were impotent. A body of cavalry, regulars and Yeomen, held in readiness, were then called upon to disperse the crowd. Instantly all was confusion. People were trampled under foot, Some were severely, many more were slightly, injured; but to describe this regrettable affair as a 'massacre' was a gross exaggeration. One policeman was killed and one Yeoman: but the Hussars behaved admittedly with exemplary forbearance; not more than twenty people had sword-wounds; the fatal injuries among the crowd did not exceed eleven, of whom one was shot and five were sabred.<sup>1</sup> Hunt and several of his associates were arrested, tried, and subsequently sentenced to imprisonment. The Regent sent a special message of appreciation to the magistrates and the troops, and Lord Sidmouth conveyed it 'with great satisfaction'. But appreciation and satisfaction were not universal. 'Peterloo' provided a good war cry for the 'Radicals'; subscriptions were opened for the victims of the 'Manchester Massacre'; meetings were held in all parts of the country to demand an inquiry and censure the Government; Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord-Lieutenant of the West Riding, presided over the meeting at York and in consequence was dismissed from his lieutenancy; most significant of all, the Common Council of London, whose privilege entitles it to access to the throne, presented a remonstrance to the Regent. The Council asserted 'the undoubted right of Englishmen to assemble together for the purpose of deliberating upon public grievances', and expressed its strongest indignation at the 'unprovoked and intemperate attack' upon a meeting 'legally assembled'.

<sup>1</sup> These are the figures quoted by Prentice (a hostile witness) who saw the affray, in *Manchester*, p. 167.

Was the assembly legal? On that point lawyers differed, but the Government thought it wise to summon Parliament and propose fresh legislation. The 'Six Acts' which were rapidly, though not without strong opposition passed, are commonly known as 'Castlereagh's'. He it was who submitted them to the House of Commons, and on him the odium attached to their enactment has mainly fallen.

Is the odium, whether falling on Castlereagh or others, in fact deserved?

Of the Six Acts the first prohibited the 'training of persons in the use of arms and the practice of military evolutions'. The prohibition infringed no constitutional rights, was evidently called for by recent events, and has, to this day, formed part of the law of the land. The second—the 'Traversing Act' was, by general admission, a salutary measure to prevent delay in the administration of justice. It was on the other four Acts that criticism fastened. Of these the first authorized the magistrates in certain districts to search for, seize, and detain arms, and the second regulated and restricted the right of public meeting. The third, providing for the prevention and punishment of seditious and blasphemous libels, dealt in a drastic fashion with a difficult and delicate problem. The author and publisher of such a libel was punishable on a second conviction by banishment or transportation for a term not exceeding seven years. The last of the series extended the tax on newspapers to broadsheets and the like which had, by evading the newspaper tax, been sold at a very cheap price.<sup>1</sup> Booksellers were required under this Act, before setting up business, to enter into recognizances for good behaviour. The last might

<sup>1</sup> The total number of taxpaying newspapers (in 1821) was 278 and the circulation 25,000,000 copies. See *A.R.* (1822), pp. 350-2.

plausibly be represented as an attempt to keep such 'dangerous' publications as Cobbett's *Political Register* out of the hands of the poorer classes. The *Register* had in fact been lately reduced in price from 1s. to 2d.; it had attained a wide circulation, and had indubitably disseminated ideas not to the liking of the Government.

The case for the Six Acts was admirably put by Castlereagh in one of the most closely reasoned speeches of his career. He began by a detailed narrative of the events which had necessitated legislation, and argued that the peril to the country was 'not less imminent than serious'. The Grand Juries in the disaffected counties, notably in Lancashire and Cheshire, had 'testified to a spirit of disaffection in their counties bordering on rebellion'. The proposed Acts would not 'abridge the real right of meeting to deliberate on public affairs which is the inherent right of Englishmen and essential to the exercise of our free constitution. They were meant and calculated only to prevent . . . its being turned aside entirely from its proper and legitimate object, and converted into a mere display of military force and preparation for open rebellion.' For some of the provisions the necessity might evaporate: Parliament would then repeal them. As long as the necessity persisted it was the duty of Parliament 'to fence the Constitution with such safeguards as may prevent it from perishing in the tumult. Wicked and depraved men must be deprived of the power of keeping the country in continual tumult and agitation. I implore the House', said Castlereagh, 'for God's sake, to look their difficulties in the face, and not be misled by an ill-timed lenity to induce dangers greater than those from which they recoil.'

Castlereagh's appeal was effective. Canning supported him in a speech as brilliant in phrasing as it was convincing in logic; Grenville and the section of the

Whigs he led supported the Government; even Brougham admitted that the conduct of the Radicals was 'bad enough to make reflecting men consider that the time was come for taking some steps in support of order'. Parliament approved by immense majorities the steps taken by Castlereagh.

Outside Parliament opinion was less unanimous. Over the head of Castlereagh there broke a storm of vituperation which even now has not completely abated. Poets like Byron and Shelley united their voices to those of the mob orators; the voices of the orators were carried away on the wind: the written words of the poets remain and still poison public opinion against the 'murderer'.

The Six Acts raise a problem which remains unsolved: where can the line be drawn between legitimate agitation and seditious insurrection? To criticize the action of the magistrates in Manchester is easy enough from the security of an academic cloister or even of a newspaper office. But the decision between action and inaction had to be taken in a moment of time, in face of a great multitude of men, already excited, and soon to be roused to a much higher pitch of excitement by the impassioned oratory of Hunt—no easy decision for the magistrates on the spot, the men responsible for the maintenance of order, for the protection of life and property in a large industrial town.

No easier, much more difficult, was the decision to be taken by the Central Government. That there was great distress among the people they were aware: that a small knot of extremists were exploiting those sufferings to effect their own ulterior purposes—altruistic or selfish, matters not—was unquestionable. A section of the Whigs was prescribing political reform as the best opiate for social disturbance. Was the opiate the true remedy? The Chartist risings in 1837 and 1848 suggest the answer.

## CATO STREET CONSPIRACY

But, assuming the accuracy of the Whig diagnosis and the soundness of their prescription, was this the moment for applying it? Is it wise or safe to attempt reform in the face of threatened revolution? To this question neither History nor Philosophy can furnish a conclusive answer.

The Ministry, with the solid support of a Parliament which, if technically unrepresentative, was not unresponsive to public opinion, decided that their first duty was to strengthen the law and to restore order. Of that decision Castlereagh was the mouthpiece; for that decision, right or wrong, he has been held mainly responsible.

Hardly were the Six Acts on the statute book when the country was startled by the news of a projected crime unparalleled since the days of Guy Fawkes. One Thistlewood was the leader of a small band of ruffians—not more than thirty—who, in February 1820, devised a plot to murder the whole Cabinet; to seize a few pieces of artillery left unguarded in London; set fire to the Mansion House and other public buildings, and establish a Provisional Government. The Cabinet was to dine on February 23rd with Lord Harrowby in Grosvenor Square, but the plot was revealed by an informer; the Cabinet dined elsewhere; the conspirators, unaware of the change of plan, were surprised in the midst of their preparations in a loft in Cato Street, off Edgware Road. The police arrangements were bungled: one Bow Street officer was killed, and of the twenty to thirty conspirators only nine were taken red-handed. The rest, including Thistlewood, escaped, but were mostly captured next day and were tried by a Special Commission. Thistlewood and four other ringleaders were hanged, and suffered the decapitation they had designed for Castlereagh and Sidmouth.

The alarm excited by the Cato Street conspiracy was

intensified by an insurrectionary movement in Glasgow and its neighbourhood. The anonymous organizers of the movement called on the people of the three kingdoms 'to come forward and effect a revolution by force'. An armed body of men were surprised by a small troop of cavalry on a country road, and most of them took flight. The rest put up a fight at Bonnymuir, where one trooper was killed; nineteen of the rebels were captured, many of them badly wounded, the rest were dispersed.

The 'battle' of Bonnymuir and the Cato Street plot marked the culmination of the five years of unrest and disorder which followed on Waterloo. But before the ship of State reached calm water it ran into a storm blowing up from a different quarter.

Death had of late wrought havoc in the Royal Family. The Princess Charlotte died in childbirth in 1817, the old Queen (her grandmother) in 1818, the Duke of Kent on January 23rd 1820, and less than a week later (29 January) the poor old King himself was released from his living tomb.

The Regent was now King; and in June his wife, from whom he separated almost immediately after their marriage, emerged from her Continental retirement, and returned to England to claim her rights as Queen, to annoy the King, and to embarrass the Ministry. Judging from contemporary memoirs, debates and so on, the Prince's marital relations would seem for a decade (1810-21) to have overshadowed all other and much more important matters. Intrinsically the business, large as it loomed at the time, is worth no more than a paragraph. A notorious profligate was perpetually annoyed by the pertinacity of a woman who, though exceedingly foolish, lacked neither courage nor brains. Since the death of his heiress the Regent had been increasingly anxious for a formal divorce. His accession to the



throne, and the melodramatic reappearance of the Queen in England, brought matters to a crisis.

The Cabinet feared the inevitable scandal which divorce proceedings would raise, and, to quote Castlereagh, 'accordingly employed their utmost diligence for nine or ten days successively to weigh with the most anxious solicitude the whole of this most arduous, perplexing and painful subject'. As a result they concurred in a proposal to omit the Queen's name from the Liturgy, to refuse her the honour of Coronation, and to make her a large allowance on condition that, and so long as, she remained abroad, laid aside the title of Queen, and ceased to annoy the King. They tried, however, to dissuade the King from the idea of a formal divorce. The King retorted that unless the present Ministry were prepared to advise a divorce, he must find another that would: if he failed he would retire to Hanover. 'I consider the Government', wrote Castlereagh to Stewart (13 February), '*as virtually dissolved*, and that the existing ministers only hold their situations till their successors are named.' No successors were named. Castlereagh and Wellington, acting for the King, tried to reach a compromise with the Queen's advocates, Brougham and Denman. They failed; and, acting on the Report of a Lords' Committee, Lord Liverpool introduced a Bill of Pains and Penalties to deprive the Queen of her title and dissolve the marriage (8 July 1820). The matter dragged on for months, and on the third reading (6 November), the Government majority for the Bill fell to 9. Liverpool accepted this as a defeat and, though the Ministry did not resign, the Bill was dropped. The Radicals were jubilant; the Whigs made all the capital they could out of the business, and the populace, so far as opinion can be gauged by noise, was enthusiastically on the Queen's side. Yet Croker wrote to Peel: 'I have never met any one of any kind who believes her

to be innocent.' That was the opinion that prevailed in private, and after 1820 even the Queen's friends were disposed to join in the prayer:

Gracious Queen we thee implore  
Go away and sin no more.  
Should that effort be too great  
Go away—at any rate.

Parliament in 1821 voted the Queen an annuity of £20,000, but she did not live to draw it. Despite the refusal of the Privy Council to allow her to be crowned with the King, the Queen attempted to force her way into the Abbey (19 July 1821). A few weeks later her unhappy life came to an end (7 August). She had already outlived her popularity. A fickle populace had almost forgotten her. High society, still more fickle, had deserted her cause. Meanwhile, Castlereagh and Sidmouth, upon whom once more responsibility for any unpopular acts was fixed, had been regularly hooted in the streets, and anonymously threatened with assassination. To these threats they gave no heed: they steadily pursued the path they deemed right: nor did they lack the reward. In answer to congratulations from Prince Metternich on the success attending the Government policy, Castlereagh replied (8 May 1820): 'Although we have made an immense progress against Radicalism the monster still lives, and shows himself in new shapes; but we do not despair of crushing him by patience and perseverance. The laws have been reinforced, the juries do their duty, and wherever the mischief in its labyrinth breaks forth, it presents little real danger, whilst it furnishes the means of making those salutary examples which are so difficult whilst treason works in secrecy, and does not disclose itself in overt acts.'<sup>1</sup>

The battle was, in fact, won: law had been reasserted;

<sup>1</sup> C.C. XII, 258-9.

order restored. Castlereagh's immediate task at home was accomplished. In April 1821 Castlereagh succeeded his father as second Marquis of Londonderry, but as the peerage was an Irish one he was able to remain in the House of Commons, though compelled to relinquish his seat for Co. Down and once more take refuge at Orford. In the autumn of 1821, however, he re-visited Ireland as minister in attendance on the King, and was greatly gratified by the reception given, not only to the Sovereign, but to his minister. To his wife he was able to report (August 1821) that the visit 'had been without alloy . . . I have not heard an unkind word drop from a single individual, and yet I have mixed unsparingly with the people'. Congratulated by a friend on the success of his visit he playfully replied: 'Why yes, I am grown, it seems, very popular; but with quite as little merit, I am afraid, as when I was most unpopular; and, after all, you must agree that *unpopularity* is the more convenient and gentlemanlike condition of the two.' Cynicism apart, Castlereagh was genuinely pleased. To the overtired man, it was no small thing to receive a kindly welcome from the people he had 'betrayed', in the country he had 'enslaved'. Castlereagh never saw Ireland again.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review* for Dec. 1848, p. 268.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CASTLEREAGH AND EUROPE (1815-1821)— THE QUADRUPLE ALLIANCE

CASTLEREAGH's true field of activity was not England but Europe. His domestic policy, bitterly attacked by contemporaries, has found few apologists among later historians. His foreign policy, now universally applauded, fared, for half a century after his death, but little better. If he was an ardent ally of Eldon and Sidmouth at home, he was in Europe a complaisant partner in the crimes of Metternich and the Continental autocrats; not until Canning replaced Castlereagh was the position of England retrieved; not until 1822 did England break away from the reactionary and repressive policy of the Holy Allies. That legend persisted for two generations after Castlereagh's death. One or two isolated apologists attempted to expose its inaccuracy, but not until the last decades of the nineteenth century was it finally dissipated. Mr. Fyffe, though himself an ardent Radical politician, deserves credit for having been one of the first, among competent historians, to discern the truth and to proclaim it. 'The legend', he wrote, 'which represents English policy as taking an absolutely new departure in 1822 does not correspond to the truth of history. . . . Two more years of life, two more years of change in the relations of England to the Continent would have given Castlereagh a different figure in the history both of Greece and of America. No English statesman in modern times has been so severely judged.'<sup>1</sup> The reaction in Castlereagh's favour

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Europe* (1886), II. 211, 233.

has, in the last twenty years, proceeded apace. It received a powerful impulse from Mr. Alison Phillips in *The Confederation of Europe* (1914); but it is only since the conclusion of the World War that research has combined with that sense of realities only to be acquired in the hard school of experience, to reveal in its true light the policy pursued by Castlereagh, and to establish, unshakably, his reputation as perhaps the greatest of our Foreign Secretaries.<sup>1</sup>

Castlereagh initiated a new era in the international position of Great Britain. From 1814 until his death, Castlereagh maintained between England and the Continent a connection much closer than ever before, and he did much to establish European 'equilibrium'. Equilibrium (Castlereagh's favourite word) was, indeed, the surest, if not the only, guarantee of the peace he so ardently desired. That is the key to his prolonged labours at Châtillon, in Paris, and in Vienna. 'In his view', as Dr. Webster justly observes, 'unless he could reconstruct Europe in such a manner as to prevent a great Continental war, Britain would inevitably be drawn in whether her interests were immediately affected or not.' His countrymen, some of his own colleagues, were not concerned with such remote problems as those of Saxony, Poland, or Southern Italy. 'It was only Castlereagh's influence', so this same apologist continued, 'which made Britain the mediator in these disputes, and thus prevented the war which would almost inevitably have occurred if he had refused to accept the responsibility thus forced upon him.'<sup>2</sup> Castlereagh's first duty, after the conclusion of the Peace Treaties, was to vindicate

<sup>1</sup> Lord Salisbury anticipated the reaction by his Essays in the *Quarterly Review* (January 1862). It has been reserved for Dr. C. K. Webster to reveal the truth in all its fulness, and to publish the *pièces justificatives*.

<sup>2</sup> Webster, II. 51-2.

their terms to the British Parliament. Of several speeches devoted to that object, the most elaborate was that delivered on 19 February 1816. According to Speaker Abbott, it occupied four hours in delivery; it fills more than thirty-one columns of Hansard! Castlereagh's survey included not only the proceedings at Vienna, but 'the whole course of measures which led to the commencement, the prosecution and the conclusion of the war, as well as the subsequent negotiations at Paris'.

After some preliminary observations, the Foreign Secretary began by justifying the part taken by Great Britain in the 'military and pecuniary transactions' necessitated by the episode of the 'Hundred Days' in 1815. In that crisis it was imperative that the allies should act unitedly, promptly and decisively. They did. The result was the great victory at Waterloo, unique both in its military and political effects. After vindicating the conduct of the allied armies in France, Castlereagh proceeded to justify the 'generous and disinterested' treatment of France in 1814. To that treatment France had most inadequately responded, and the terms imposed upon her in the Second Treaty of Paris were, therefore, necessarily more drastic. But, if the allies were committed in 1815 to the deposition of Napoleon and the exclusion of his dynasty, they were not pledged to restore Louis XVIII. To represent the war of 1815 as undertaken with that object was, therefore, entirely misleading. Castlereagh agreed that as an abstract principle wanton interference in the internal affairs of another country was to be deprecated. But after all that had recently happened in France, the allies were bound to take certain precautions against a recurrence of the threat to the peace of Europe. Those precautions were directed 'not against France as a nation, but against France as the concentration of military

‘jacobinism’. Accordingly, the allies insisted on the disbandment of the Napoleonic army, but refrained from the humiliation or dismemberment of France. Their supreme concern was, indeed, ‘to tranquillize the world’. Hence the still lenient terms conceded to France in 1815. The moderate money indemnity required from her Castlereagh defended on the ground that, as Napoleon had always made his wars pay for themselves, France was ‘in a state of greater financial affluence than any other country in Europe’, and in any case a money payment was far less hurtful to the pride of France than any ‘proceeding of dismemberment’. To hon. members who said that France ‘could not and would not pay’, it was sufficient to answer that she had already made ‘very considerable payments’ and would certainly pay the balance rather than face the alternative—permanent cessions of territories temporarily held, against repayment, by allied forces.

The important thing was, however, to insist upon concerted action: ‘Whatever it was wise to do at all, it was important should be done not by any particular State, but by Europe as a whole.’ To ‘the unanimity and harmony now subsisting among the allies’ they owed the victory achieved over France, ‘the spirit of moderation and temper’ which had inspired the Peace, and the happiest augury for the future of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The debate was maintained with animation for two nights, but although, according to a contemporary account, ‘all the eloquence and ingenuity of the House in political discussion were employed’, few points, at once novel and important, were made by the Opposition. Much the most vigorous attack upon the Government was that of Lord Grenville in the House of Lords. Lord Grenville ‘arraigned without scruple or reserve every fault of omission or commission he could find in

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxxii. 673-704.

the 'Treaty', reprobated the ungenerous treatment of Napoleon as 'objectionable on principle and disgusting to the feelings of all who had a nature capable of justice or humanity to a fallen foe'.<sup>1</sup> The Whig Peers could, however, muster only 40 against the 104 votes for the Government. In the House of Commons the debating strength of the Opposition had been greatly impaired by the death, self-inflicted, of Samuel Whitbread (6 July 1815). Inordinately vain and irritable, Whitbread was yet a generous and warmhearted man, and by indefatigable industry and assiduity had made himself a real power in debate. In the speech with which he wound up for the Government, Castlereagh had no difficulty in disposing of the few points made by the Opposition, and the House supported him by the large majority of 163 (240 *v.* 77).<sup>2</sup>

The real point at issue, as so often happens in Parliamentary debate, was never even touched upon by the Opposition, and only incidentally by Castlereagh himself. It was between Association and Isolation. That issue still persists. Great Britain had supplied the cohesive force to coalition after coalition against Napoleon; Castlereagh was the soul of the alliance which finally overthrew him in 1815. Was England, then, to withdraw into her shell and refuse to participate in the attempt to safeguard the peace she had done so much to achieve? Castlereagh was insistent that the Concert of the Great Powers was indispensable to European tranquillity. But the isolationists were numerous and vociferous. Castlereagh had to defend, almost single-handed, a foreign policy which, as Dr. Webster has truly remarked, was 'at once new, intricate, and opposed to the prejudice of his countrymen'.

<sup>1</sup> The expressions are Lord Holland's (*Further Memoirs*, pp. 216-7) but they represent Grenville's main contentions.

<sup>2</sup> P.D., xxxii. 793-801.



Ten days before this general debate on the Treaties, Mr. Brougham moved in the House of Commons for the production of the agreement, concluded in Paris, between the Emperors of Russia and Austria and the King of Prussia, and derisively known to history as *The Holy Alliance*.

Few transactions in high politics have been more hardly judged or more grotesquely misrepresented. The mood of the moment was an exalted one; the Czar Alexander, with a mind inclined to mysticism and a most impressionable heart, had lately come under strong evangelical influences exerted by Madame de Krudener. For years past the Czar had been face to face with the horrors of war, but he knew that ever since the days of Henri IV and his *Great Design* there had floated before the eyes of idealists the dream of 'Perpetual Peace'. The final defeat of Napoleon seemed to the Czar to offer an opportunity for translating the dream into a reality. Accordingly he drafted and, on 26 September 1815 he issued, over the signatures of the Sovereigns of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, a solemn Declaration affirming 'their fixed resolution, both in the administration of their respective States and in their political relations with every other Government, to take for their sole guide the precepts of the Christian religion—namely the precepts of justice, Christian charity and peace . . . Conformably to the words of the Holy Scriptures . . . the three contracting monarchs will remain united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity. . . .'<sup>1</sup> On the same day the three Sovereigns invited the Prince Regent, their 'first and most intimate ally', to accede to a Treaty, the object of which was 'to strengthen the relations which unite us in forming all the nations of Christendom into one single family, and assuring

<sup>1</sup> Full text *ap. Hertslet: Map of Europe by Treaty*, I. 317-19; of the Regent's reply, p. 320.

them by this, under the protection of the Almighty, happiness, security, the benefits of peace, and the bonds of fraternity for ever indissoluble'.

The Prince Regent, in reply, expressed his regret that 'the forms of the British Constitution' precluded him from formally acceding to the Treaty, but he conveyed to the august signatories his 'entire concurrence in the principles they had laid down and in the declaration they had set forth of making the Divine precepts of the Christian religion the invariable rule of their conduct in all their relations, social and political'.

Brougham's demand for the production of the treaty was refused by Castlereagh solely on the ground that it was 'contrary to Parliamentary usage to call for the production of treaties to which this country had not acceded'. But he took the opportunity to dispel the absurd idea that the treaty was 'the forerunner of some undefined crusade against some nation or other not a party to it', and at the same time to congratulate Europe and the world on the Czar's noble determination 'to secure a long and beneficial peace'.<sup>1</sup> So much for the floor of the House of Commons. Privately, Castlereagh described the Document as 'a piece of mysticism and nonsense' and was led to doubt the sanity of the Czar; Canning was more suspicious of his sincerity. Metternich regarded the whole transaction with cynical contempt, but that did not prevent him from utilizing the Alliance and its author for the promotion of his own policy.

Quite distinct in origin from the Holy Alliance, but often confounded with it, was the Quadruple Treaty. Signed on the same day as the Second Treaty of Paris (20 November 1815), the Quadruple Treaty was specifically based upon the Treaties of Chaumont and Vienna and was primarily the work of Castlereagh. The Four

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.*, xxxii. 361-2.

## THE QUADRUPLE TREATY

Powers solemnly renewed these treaties and guaranteed the Second Treaty of Paris, they agreed to maintain the exclusion of Buonaparte and his family from the throne of France, and, if the Revolution should again 'convulse France and thereby endanger the repose of other States' to concert . . . the measures which they may judge necessary . . . for the safety of their several States, and for the general tranquillity of Europe'. Finally they agreed in order to 'consolidate the connexions which at the present moment so closely unite the four sovereigns for the happiness of the world to renew their meetings at fixed periods . . . for the purpose of consulting upon their common interests and for the consideration of the measures which at each of these periods shall be considered the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of nations and for the maintenance of the peace of Europe'.<sup>1</sup>

This treaty laid the foundations of that 'Concert of Europe which, until 1822, largely determined the course of international politics. It may also be regarded as the crowning and most characteristic achievement of Castlereagh's career.

Lord Castlereagh followed it up by addressing to all the British Missions in foreign capitals a Circular Dispatch, calling their attention to the diplomatic transactions of the past year, 'which from their magnitude and importance must be considered as prospectively forming the basis of our diplomatic policy'.

Castlereagh insisted on the value of 'open diplomacy,' enjoining British representatives abroad to 'adopt a direct method of intercourse in the conduct of business, and to repress . . . the spirit of local intrigue in which diplomatic policy is so falsely considered to consist, and which so frequently creates the very evil which it is intended to avert'. Everything should be done to allay

<sup>1</sup> Full text in Hertslet, *op. cit.*, p. 572.

any jealousies on the part of the smaller Powers, and any apprehensions that the Great Powers had created machinery 'to keep others in check'. In particular those Powers should be assured that British policy was 'founded upon no separate view of interest or ambition'; of possessions and fame Great Britain can desire no more; the only desire of the British Sovereign is to 'employ all His influence to preserve the peace which in concert with His allies he has won'.<sup>1</sup>

The preservation of peace was the task to which Castlereagh dedicated the brief remainder of his life. The concert of the Powers was a means to that end. Not that the Ambassadors of the Great Powers in Paris could be 'suffered to present themselves as an European Council for the management of the affairs of the world'. That was Metternich's idea, but Castlereagh strongly objected to it mainly because it was likely to infringe the rights of the small States. To the principle of the Concert, Castlereagh was, however, at least as devoted as Metternich, and did, in fact, much more to promote it, and to discourage the suspicions of Russia which Metternich, after 1815, increasingly entertained. More particularly was Metternich suspicious of Russian intrigues in Italy which he was determined to rule from Vienna. Nor was he quite easy about the attitude of England in reference to the affairs of Naples and Sicily. Of Bentinck's foolish policy in Sicily Castlereagh was almost as contemptuous as Metternich himself. But Castlereagh had to face a Parliament; Metternich had not. While, therefore, Castlereagh agreed that the Bentinck Constitution had proved entirely unsuited to conditions prevailing in Sicily, and might even provoke dangerous reactions in Naples, he insisted that the word 'Parliament' must be preserved, even if the thing signified by it was destroyed.

<sup>1</sup> Webster: II. App. A.

## THE CONCERT OF EUROPE

Castlereagh has been accused of equivocation in this matter, of throwing dust in the eyes of the English Parliament. That he did not tell Parliament all that he said privately to Stewart at Vienna and à Court at Naples is true. But those only can blame Castlereagh for 'duplicity' who are unaware of the amazing insularity of English politicians, and of the curious superstition that prevails among them in reference to the sacrosanct nature of Parliamentary Institutions. Castlereagh had to reckon with the belief, hardly shaken, even after the lapse of a century, that the one prescription, applicable to every form of political disease, was a Parliamentary Constitution on the British model. Castlereagh, with his wider experience of affairs and his instinct for statesmanship, was naturally impatient of the political quackery so prevalent in a Parliament whose opinion it was nevertheless essential for him to conciliate, and with whose support he could not dispense.

If the Concert of Europe was Castlereagh's object, the system of periodical Congresses supplied the machinery by which he hoped to achieve it. But the situation in 1818 demanded all the tact which Castlereagh possessed. The Continental autocrats had persistently endeavoured to confuse the objects of the Quadruple Treaty with those of the Holy Allies, and so to make England a party to their own reactionary views. On the other hand, opinion in the British Parliament and even in the Cabinet was definitely hardening against Continental 'entanglements'. Castlereagh was, of course, conscious of the movement of opinion, and was himself increasingly suspicious of the aims and methods both of the Czar and of Prince Metternich, between whom, however, there was not a little mutual mistrust. Castlereagh, therefore, insisted on the simplification of the procedure and the limitation of the scope of the Congress which, in September 1818, met at Aix-la-Chapelle.

The Sovereigns of Russia, Austria and Prussia were present in person. Among the accredited diplomatists were Castlereagh and Wellington, Metternich, Hardenberg, Nesselrode and Capo D'Istria. The Duke of Richelieu, Prime Minister of France, was also admitted, to enable him to present a petition that France might be forthwith relieved from the humiliation and expense of maintaining the army of occupation. The consideration of this question was indeed the primary purpose of the Congress. The Treaty of Paris had provided that 'the military occupation of France might cease at the end of three years' if the allies approved. The decision really rested with the Duke of Wellington, who advised that the 'army of occupation might, without danger to France herself and to the peace of Europe, be withdrawn'. The Congress accepted his advice. France, backed by the great financial houses of Baring and Hope, entered into renewed engagements for the payment of the unliquidated claims of the allies (still amounting to some £33,000,000), and by the end of the year not a single foreign soldier was encamped upon French soil. At the same time France was formally readmitted to the bosom of the European family: the Quadruple Alliance of 1815 was converted into the 'Moral Pentarchy' of 1818. But the Treaty of November 1815 was not renewed in its original form. Experience had already suggested to the cautious mind of Castlereagh certain modifications. The three years which had elapsed since 1815 had confirmed the suspicions of the British Government. It had become manifest that Metternich was bent upon exploiting the Concert of Europe in the interests of repression and reaction. The machinery of the European Concert might evidently prove useful both in furthering the cause of reaction, and in quelling any incipient insurrections provoked by the reactionary policy of the

restored sovereigns. As regards France the allies were in complete accord. By a secret Protocol (15 November 1818) they agreed to renew the engagements of 1815 and to confer 'on the most effectual means of arresting the fatal effects of a new revolutionary convulsion with which France may be threatened'.<sup>1</sup> But against any general extension of the principle of intervention in the domestic concerns of independent States the English Government presented a firm front.

The general result of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle was a renewal of the Alliance of 1815 in more general terms, but in an additional Protocol it was specifically laid down that the 'government by Congresses' was not to be systematized, and the doctrine that the Great Powers were to exercise a perpetual and continuous surveillance over the domestic affairs of their smaller neighbours or of each other was, thanks mainly to Castlereagh, definitely and firmly repudiated. For the moment Castlereagh's influence was indeed decisive. 'The weight of England', wrote Lord Stewart to Lord Liverpool, 'has been prodigious at this meeting. . . . Had it not been for the unwearied labour of my brother and the Duke of Wellington . . . it is evident that no progress would have been made.' They it was who protected the smaller States from the officious benevolence of the Holy Alliance; to them Europe owed the manifest failure of the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle 'to provide the transparent soul of the Holy Alliance with a body'.<sup>2</sup>

Castlereagh's conduct of affairs throughout these difficult years was a model of constancy and consistency. He adhered loyally to the 'European Concert' which he had done so much to create; to have broken away

<sup>1</sup> Wellington: *Supplementary Despatches*, XII. 835-7. The Protocol was communicated *privately* to Richelieu.

<sup>2</sup> The proceedings of this Congress are described in detail by Phillips: *Confederation of Europe*, c. v; by Webster: II. 131-72.

from it would have been, under the circumstances, a 'crime against the civilization'. But no one knew better than Castlereagh how much danger lurked in that experiment, no one was so vigilant in restraining the operations of the allies as soon as they threatened to transgress the limits he had defined.

The moment of transgression soon arrived. The restorations of 1814-15 were quickly followed by reaction. The Bourbon Sovereigns in Spain and the two Sicilies plunged at once into a veritable orgy of reprisal and repression. The ultra-Royalists in France pushed Louis XVIII along the same path, but he trod it more warily and with evident reluctance. Both in Spain and Southern Italy reaction was followed by revolution. The Czar Alexander, rapidly discarding the thin *veneer of Liberalism*, was all eagerness to throw Russian troops, in the interests of autocracy, into the Peninsula. Metternich was bent on 'restoring order' in Italy. Both hoped to obtain for their several enterprises the sanction of the Allied Powers. In regard to Spain, Alexander had no right of interference save such as might be deduced from the principles embodied in the Quadruple Treaty and the Protocols of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Castlereagh was determined that the instruments he had fashioned should not be perverted to a use he detested and deprecated. His attitude in regard to the Spanish insurrection and the threatened intervention of Russia is set forth in a Memorandum which, in May 1820, he submitted to the Cabinet. He strongly deprecated external interference, whether collective or individual, in the domestic affairs of Spain, a Power less likely than any other in Europe to 'menace other States with that direct and imminent danger which had always been regarded, at least in this country, as alone constituting the case which would justify external interference'. On more general grounds he combated the



# CASTLEREAGH'S MEMORANDUM

notion 'too perceptibly prevalent, that whenever any great political event shall occur, as in Spain, pregnant perhaps with future danger, it is to be regarded almost as a matter of course that it belongs to the allies to charge themselves collectively with the Responsibility of exercising some Jurisdiction regarding possible or eventual danger. . . . The principle of one State interfering by force in the internal affairs of another in order to enforce obedience to the governing authority, is always a question of the greatest possible moral as well as political delicacy . . . to generalize such a principle . . . or to impose it as an obligation, is a scheme utterly impracticable and objectionable . . . the sooner such a doctrine shall be distinctly abjured as forming the basis of our alliance the better.' States 'more purely monarchical' may regard the matter differently 'but Great Britain must repudiate such doctrines.' 'When the territorial Balance of Europe is disturbed [Great Britain] can interfere with effect but she is the last Government in Europe which can . . . commit herself on any question of an abstract character. . . . We shall be found in our place when actual danger menaces the system of Europe, but the country cannot and will not act upon abstract and speculative Principles of Precaution. The Alliance which exists had no such purpose in view in its original formation.' It was not so explained to Parliament; had it been, Parliament would never have sanctioned it.<sup>1</sup>

This remarkable Memorandum was subsequently published by Canning and adopted by him as the basis of his policy. But that it was originally drafted by Castlereagh there can be no question: Canning himself told the House of Commons that he 'found it in the records of his office', and the tone and even the language of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, 622 f., where the whole paper is printed.

it are identical with the still more famous protest which Castlereagh published on the 19th January 1821 against the Troppau Circular.<sup>1</sup> The substance of the Memorandum was, moreover, conveyed to Metternich as the 'unanimous opinion of the British Cabinet' and as having been 'formally submitted to and approved by the King'.<sup>2</sup>

As regards Russian interference in Spain Metternich was in complete accord with Castlereagh, and the Czar abandoned his project. Great Britain had her own quarrel with the Bourbon Government in Spain, and was not less concerned about the insurrection which, in August 1820, broke out in Portugal. But it was not until after Castlereagh's death that the situation in the Peninsula reached the critical stage.

The position in Southern Italy, on the contrary, demanded immediate attention. Sparks from the Spanish conflagration fell on a people in Southern Italy by no means disaffected towards a monarchy as tolerant of abuses as its subjects. But what one Bourbon had conceded in Madrid might surely be demanded from another Bourbon in Naples. Promptly, and with a solemn oath taken at the altar, King Ferdinand conceded all the demands and swore fidelity to a Parliamentary Constitution.

But the seat of authority for Italy was not in Naples, or in any other Italian capital, but in Vienna. Metternich, greatly alarmed by the outbreak of insurrection at Naples, would gladly have accepted sole responsibility for dealing with it. The British Cabinet recognized that Austria had an undoubted right to act against the Neapolitan rebels, but she must not look to Great Britain for help, military or diplomatic, and her interference must be individual, not collective.

That was not the view of the Czar Alexander. Smart-

<sup>1</sup> See Webster: II. 245. Templeley (*Canning*, p. 14) also ascribes the authorship to Castlereagh.

<sup>2</sup> *C.C.*, XII. 258.

## CONGRESS OF TROPPAU

ing under his defeat in the matter of Spain, the Czar demanded that the Neapolitan business should be submitted to a formal Conference, and that intervention, if approved, should be collective. France, claiming a special interest in the affairs of a Bourbon kingdom, supported the demand of Russia for a Conference of the Five Powers. Metternich demurred to this: Castlereagh refused to take part in it. Impaled on the horns of a dilemma Metternich strove hard to reconcile the views of Great Britain and Russia, but was ultimately compelled to agree to the meeting of a Congress.

The Congress met on October 20th, 1820, at Troppau, in Austrian Silesia. Castlereagh remained inexorable in his opposition. Lord Stewart was allowed to go to Troppau as an 'observer', but in the deliberations of the Congress was to take no formal part. The position taken up by Castlereagh was from first to last unequivocal and consistent. If Austrian interests were threatened by what happened in Italy, let Austria intervene to protect them, provided that 'she engages in this undertaking with no views of aggrandizement' and that 'her plans are limited to self-defence'. 'We desire', wrote Castlereagh to Stewart, 'to leave Austria unembarrassed in her course' but she must act on her own responsibility, and in her own name.<sup>1</sup> There must be no concerted action.

Discussions at Troppau took, however, a much wider scope, and on November 19 the three Eastern Powers—the original Holy Allies—issued a Protocol setting forth, with startling explicitness, their own doctrines, and inviting the adhesion of Great Britain and France.

'States', it declared, 'which have undergone a change of Government due to revolution, the result of which threatens other States, *ipso facto* cease to be members of the European Alliance, and remain excluded from it

<sup>1</sup> C.C., XII. 311-18 (16 September, 1820).

until their situation gives guarantees for legal order and stability. . . . If, owing to such alterations, immediate danger threatens other States, the Powers bind themselves, by peaceful means, or if need be by arms, to bring back the guilty State into the bosom of the Great Alliance.'

In order to allay the apprehensions likely to be aroused by the Protocol, the Eastern Powers issued an explanatory circular (8 December 1820). They asserted that 'the Powers have exercised an undeniable right in concerting together upon means of safety against those States in which the overthrow of a Government caused by revolution could only be considered as a dangerous example, which could only result in a hostile attitude against constitutional and legitimate Governments', and they added a confident hope that 'the goodwill of all right-minded men will no doubt follow the allied Courts in the noble Arena in which they are about to enter'.<sup>1</sup> France expressed a general assent, but Castlereagh, on behalf of Great Britain, declined to become a party to the measures which would be 'in direct repugnance to the fundamental laws of this country'. Further, in a circular dispatch of great vigour (19th January 1821), while admitting the individual right of Austria to interfere in Naples, he denounced the principles enunciated at Troppau on the ground that they 'would inevitably sanction . . . a much more extensive interference in the internal transactions of States than . . . can be reconcilable either with the general interest or with the efficient authority and dignity of independent Sovereigns'.<sup>2</sup>

Castlereagh's categorical and outspoken dissent from the views of the Eastern Courts created a profound sensation. Received with dismay by the Holy Allies,

<sup>1</sup> Hertslet: I. 659.

<sup>2</sup> Hertslet: I. 664. Castlereagh's *Dispatch* of 19 January 1821 is also printed in full in *Annual Register*, for 1820, pp. 737-9.

it created immense enthusiasm at Naples, and was received in the Assembly with loud cries of '*Viva l'Inghilterra*'.

It did nothing, however, to deter the Holy Allies from their predetermined course. From Troppau the Conference adjourned, in order to meet the convenience of Ferdinand of Naples, to Laibach, whither the King was summoned to give an account, before the High Court of the Holy Allies, of his dealings with his turbulent subjects. Ferdinand attended; repudiated his oath, and protested that his concessions were made to *force majeure*. Sentence was duly delivered and Austria was entrusted, as the executive of the European police, with the congenial task of restoring order in Southern Italy. That task was hardly accomplished when revolution broke out in Piedmont. Austrian troops thereupon crossed the Ticino, with the entire assent of King Charles Felix, and an almost bloodless skirmish at Novara sufficed to crush the insurrection. The full vials of Metternich's wrath were poured out, however, upon the Austrian subjects in Lombardy. The Carbonari in Milan had been in correspondence with their fellows in Turin. That was enough for Metternich. Austrian dungeons were soon crammed with political prisoners from the Italian provinces. The Austrian yoke was riveted, more firmly than ever, upon Italy.

While Austria was thus occupied, with high satisfaction to herself, in Italy, France was itching to go to the assistance of the Bourbon autocrat in Spain. On the pretext of establishing a *cordon sanitaire* against an epidemic of yellow fever (August 1821) France gradually massed 100,000 men on the Pyrenean frontier. The Eastern Powers were by no means opposed to French intervention in Spain, but before it could be formally sanctioned by the Holy Allies, their attention was per-

force attracted to events nearer home. The Greeks, after four centuries of political submergence, had raised the flag of national independence.

Meanwhile, the whole question of the relations between Great Britain and the Holy Alliance was debated in both Houses on more than one occasion with the greatest vehemence. Parliament met on January 23 1821, and in the House of Lords Lord Grey at once raised the matter (January 24), and returned to it in an elaborate speech on February 19. The debate turned largely on Castlereagh's Circular of January. To Lord Grey the disclaimer of the British Cabinet appeared 'chilled by all the frosts and involved in all the fogs of winter'. Lord Holland maintained that there was strong ground for the suspicion entertained by the Opposition of 'partiality on the part of the British Government, if not of connivance in the proceedings of the allied Powers against Naples.'<sup>1</sup>

Two days later, Sir James Mackintosh, with even greater elaboration, but in the manner and the spirit of a doctrinaire, arraigned both the policy of the Holy Alliance and the procedure in reference thereto of the British Government. He denounced 'the intentions of this new dictatorship of Europe as tyrannical, odious and flagitious'. With grotesque exaggeration he suggested that, on the principles enunciated by Prince Metternich, a British Government might 'invite into this country an army, for instance, of 100,000 Russians or Austrians'. It was 'a proposition for encamping a whole horde of Cossacks or Croats in Hyde Park, and for protecting the free and unbiassed deliberations of the House of Commons by an army of Germans and Russians'. Castlereagh's reply ought to have convinced every reasonable opponent, as it has convinced every serious historical critic, that all this suspicion as to the

<sup>1</sup> P.D. (N.S.), iv. 116, 742-97.

attitude of the British Government was purely fantastic. With great force Castlereagh pointed out the palpable inconsistency of his opponents. During the Napoleonic Wars they had 'perpetually recommended that England should rest upon its oars', and had maintained 'that our only chance of safety consisted in husbanding our resources'. It was, therefore, strange to hear ministers *now* censured for not having committed this country 'to a war with the greatest military powers in Europe'. The sometime pacifists had suddenly been inflamed with military ardour. To the request for acquiescence in the principles proclaimed in the Troppau Circular the British Government had promptly given a 'direct negative'. The Government had no wish to interfere in the affairs of Southern Italy; if they were impelled to remonstrate with either party they must be prepared to enforce that remonstrance; but for another war they had no appetite.<sup>1</sup> The House supported the Government by 194 votes against 125.

A few days later (26 February) Lord Castlereagh had to defend Sir Thomas Maitland, a soldier with a distinguished record and lately appointed Lord High Commissioner of the Ionian Isles, against charges of extravagance and corruption in his administration at Corfu.<sup>2</sup> Both Houses returned to the discussion of Neapolitan affairs before Easter. Lord Lansdowne impugned the conduct of the allies in the Upper House, where he was brilliantly supported by Lord Holland, and effectively answered by Lord Liverpool. In the Lower House Sir R. Wilson raised a somewhat narrower issue—the conduct of the Government in taking measures for the personal safety of the Royal Family at Naples—but the scope of the debate soon broadened out. It thus gave Castlereagh an opportunity of reiterating explicitly the

<sup>1</sup> *P.D.* (N.S.), iv. 837-94.

<sup>2</sup> Again debated on 7 June, *P.D.*, v. 1128-49.

position of the Government. The debate was chiefly memorable, however, for a most brilliant speech in defence of the Government from Canning. Quite unreservedly Canning not only avowed but claimed his share of responsibility for the measures now called in question by the Whig Opposition. Of the militant pacifists he made short work: 'Away with the distinction between war and an armed negotiation. . . . Unless it was proposed to go even to the last extremity . . . all mention of support was but a fraud.' The world was involved and likely to be involved in 'struggles between contending principles, fierce, arduous and of doubtful issue. . . . But to these struggles it is not our duty to be parties; to that havoc we have no moral right to give the stimulus of our exhortations, or the fallacious encouragement of a partial and precarious support.' Canning spoke that day as a private member, having retired from the Cabinet in November 1820, on account of his connection with the Queen's affairs. The day was not far distant when he would have to speak as the Leader of the House, and as primarily responsible for the conduct of Foreign Affairs.

But for another eighteen months that responsibility remained with Castlereagh, and on a tired man the burden was increasingly heavy. Still, he struggled bravely to sustain it. In the course of the session Castlereagh, or the Marquis of Londonderry (as in April he had, on his father's death, become), made one hundred speeches. Those speeches ranged, as the speeches of the Leader of the House must, over a vast range of topics, on every one of which the Leader is bound to keep himself informed. Foreign Affairs—the Laibach Circular, Bentinck's Constitution in Sicily, Austrian intervention in Piedmont, the rumoured Russian intervention in Spain—these matters were within Castlereagh's own domain. So was the Slave Trade, twice raised during



this session by Wilberforce. On questions of public expenditure and taxation Castlereagh had always to be ready to come to the assistance of a none too competent colleague. To the disfranchisement of Grampound he showed himself in principle not opposed, and on Poor Law questions (constantly raised in debate), and even towards Robert Owen's experiment at New Lanark, he was, if critical, not unsympathetic.

Nor was Castlereagh insensible to the reputation of the House in the country. At the close of the session he took occasion to observe that 'he thought it might be agreeable for their constituents to know that upon an average the House had sat (not reckoning committee work in the mornings) eight hours and forty minutes for every sitting day throughout the session'. He claimed, therefore, that whatever the Opposition or the public outside might think, it 'was plain that if the House of Commons did no good, it was not for want of labour'. Of that labour Castlereagh took more than his share.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LAST YEARS—THE EASTERN QUESTION —OLD AND NEW SPAIN

THE last days of Castlereagh's busy life were devoted to two difficult problems, the solution of which he perforce bequeathed to his successor. One raised, in an entirely fresh aspect, the immemorial problem of the Near East; the other was concerned with the old-new world of the Far West.

On the statesmen assembled at Laibach the news of an insurrection among the Greek subjects of the Sultan fell as a bolt from the blue. Statesmen must needs be mainly concerned with symptoms; to prophets it is sometimes given to discern the signs of the times, the causes that have produced the portents, the results likely to arise from their appearance. Diplomats whose minds were concentrated on revolutionary symptoms in the Iberian and Italian peninsulas were naturally startled to hear of revolution in the Ottoman Empire. A discerning prophet, even if he had failed to anticipate the event, might at least, after it happened, have enlightened the statesmen about its significance. For four hundred years the Turks had been encamped on European soil, but they had neither exterminated nor absorbed the indigenous peoples—Serbs, Roumans, Greeks and Bulgars—whom they had conquered. These peoples, though submerged, survived. The Turks paid little heed to them; Europe for long centuries paid none. Yet memories of a great past were kept alive, hopes of a future were sustained, by popular ballads, by local

## THE GREEK INSURRECTION

traditions, not least by the parish priests of their own faith.

The Greeks, in particular, never lost hope of a future. If destroyed as a State, they survived as a 'nation', and individually they prospered. They supplied the Turk with a capable bureaucracy; they manned his fleet; they made great fortunes in trade; they cultivated their own language, preserved their own religion, formed secret societies, and at the end of the eighteenth century they felt the breath of revolution that emanated from Paris. Napoleon, if he destroyed liberty, gave an immense, if unintentional, impulse to the idea of nationality. Upon no people did that complex and elusive idea operate more powerfully than on the Hellenes.

The Serbs had revolted in 1804 and, after waging with gallantry an intermittent struggle, had in 1817 extorted from the Turks a limited measure of local autonomy. The Greeks were determined to do better. In 1821 Prince Alexander Hypsilanti, one of Capo D'Istria's aides-de-camp, raised in Moldavia the flag of Greek independence. The choice of the locale was unwise, but it was made in the hope of help from the Czar of Russia. But the ally of Metternich, the founder of the Holy Alliance, could not countenance revolution even against his traditional enemy the Turk. Hypsilanti was left to his fate, and the rising in the Danubian Principalities collapsed.

Far different, though not unchequered, was the history of the rising in the Morea of the Greek islands. In April 1821 the Greeks rose in the Morea and massacred every Moslem on whom they could lay hands. The Turks retaliated in kind: they hanged the Greek Patriarch with three Archbishops in Constantinople, and in Thessaly, Macedonia and Asia Minor put the Greek Christians to the sword.

The indignation aroused among their co-religionists

Without deviation, however, Castlereagh pursued a policy at once clear and consistent. Russia must be restrained from intervention; but in order to avert it, pressure must be put upon the Sultan to agree with his Russian adversary quickly, to exhibit humanity towards his Greek subjects, and not blindly to confound the innocent with the guilty.

As regards Russo-Turkish relations, Metternich was completely in accord with Castlereagh. In October 1821 King George visited Hanover; Castlereagh accompanied his Sovereign, and Metternich travelled from Vienna to consult them. By different approaches, the two statesmen reached the same conclusion: 'Mon entente avec Lord Londonderry est', wrote Metternich, 'complete'. 'Prince Metternich's instructions to the Austrian Ministers at the several Courts,' wrote Castlereagh, 'will be framed strictly upon the same principle as those I now transmit.'

Metternich, however, had none of that sympathy with the Greeks which Castlereagh did not hesitate to avow. 'If', wrote Castlereagh, 'a statesman were permitted to regulate his conduct by the counsels of his heart instead of the dictates of his understanding' he would naturally use every effort to redeem from Turkish bondage their 'suffering and Christian subjects, . . . the descendants of those in admiration of whom we have been educated'. Our immediate task is to provide for the peace and security of Europe at large and the Balkans in particular. We must not allow ourselves 'under loose notions of humanity and amendment' to encourage the Greek insurrection upon the remote chance that war might ultimately bring them a measure of self-government, but with the immediate certainty of throwing into chaos the whole political system of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To Sir C. Bagot at Petersburg. See Webster: II. 375-82; and Phillips, p. 238 f, and Metternich *Memoires*, III, 474 f.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR VERONA

How events would shape themselves neither Castlereagh nor any other human being could have foreseen; but less than ten months after writing the dispatch summarized in the preceding paragraph Castlereagh's work was interrupted by his premature death. From the lines Castlereagh laid down Canning did not deviate. On the contrary, he adopted without the alteration of a word the instructions which Castlereagh had drafted for his own guidance at the Conference of Verona. These instructions were given to Wellington, when appointed to represent Castlereagh at the Conference, and they were endorsed by his successor.

The instructions dealt with the three questions which had occupied so much of Castlereagh's time and thought during the last two years of his life—the affairs of Turkey, Old and New Spain, and Italy.

Italian affairs are disposed of in a few sentences, being 'for the present of very secondary importance'. It is altogether improbable that the Kings of Naples and Sardinia would consent to dispense for the present with the aid of the Austrian forces. In this matter, accordingly, the British plenipotentiary at the Congress will act merely as an observer, though 'taking care that nothing is done inconsistent with the general system of Europe and the observance of treaties'.

As regards the affairs of the East British policy has pursued, since the outbreak of the Greek revolution, three objects: '(i) to prevent a rupture between Russia and the Porte; (ii) to soften, as far as possible, the rigours of war between the Turks and the Greeks; and (iii) to observe in the contest a strict neutrality.' During the progress of discussions arising out of this 'complicated state of affairs' our object has been 'to obtain an equitable satisfaction for Russia for admitted infractions of existing engagements and to replace the lives, property and religion of the Greek people under the protection of

treaties now in force'. To this end we have made the Russian ultimatum to the Porte of 6 (18) July 1821 the basis of our policy, and the present prospect is encouraging.

Lately, however, there has emerged an entirely new and most important feature—the 'progress made by the Greeks towards the formation of a Government which may compel us, if a *de facto* Government shall actually be established in the Morea and Western Province of Turkey, to acknowledge the rights of the Greeks as belligerents, but 'it must be done with caution and without ostentation lest it should render the Turks wholly inaccessible to our remonstrances'. In particular, 'care must be taken not to commit this country to any immediate or eventual concert that shall go beyond the limits of good offices; engagements in the nature of a guarantee are to be considered altogether inadmissible.'<sup>1</sup>

Those were the last words ever written by Castlereagh on the immemorial problem of the Near East. No more than a passing reference was made in the Memorandum to three other matters, the Slave Trade, the Austrian Debt and the Russian Ukase; but in regard to a fourth, the Spanish Colonies in South America, the instructions were full and precise.

Amid the troubled waters washing two continents Castlereagh had kept an undeviating course. After Napoleon's fall Old Spain found itself saddled with a ridiculous Constitution and the worst of all the restored monarchs. The Spanish people as a whole cared nothing for a Constitution modelled on the unworkable French Constitution of 1791; they were devoted to the Monarchy, and even more devoted to the Church. The King's return was hailed with rapturous enthusiasm. Had he contented himself with tearing up the Constitution, recalling the Jesuits, and restoring the Church, he would

<sup>1</sup> Wellington: *Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda*, I. 284.

## REVOLT OF SPANISH COLONIES

have lost nothing in popularity, but, as already indicated, he combined with hopeless incompetence gross ingratitude and revolting cruelty. Nevertheless, only the officers of the army and a few doctrinaire republicans had any affection for the Cortes, and them Ferdinand was at special pains to alienate.

It was, however, the revolt of their colonies in South America that brought matters to a crisis in Old Spain. The revolt had broken out at Buenos Ayres in 1809, and was at first directed against the intruding Buonapartist régime in Old Spain. In 1810 Chile, and what is now Argentina, successfully asserted their independence, and maintained it, as did Mexico and Columbia (1821), against the restored Bourbon monarchy.

Great Britain was, in two ways, interested in the revolt of the Spanish Colonies. A large number of British nationals, some of them men of position, like Lord Cochrane, afterwards Earl of Dundonald, and many more unknown to fame, had enlisted as volunteers under the insurgent flag. This British Legion won great distinction in the ensuing war of independence, and contributed not a little to its success.

British traders were not less interested than British volunteers. The narrow and exclusive policy of the Spanish Government had throttled the colonial trade, restricting it as far as possible to the Mother Country. Against that policy British traders had long chafed, and after the revolt of the colonies a large and lucrative trade had been established between them and Great Britain. In 1818 the United States had recognized the *de facto* Governments established in Latin America and, despite urgent requests from Madrid, the British Government had refused to remonstrate against that recognition. Meanwhile, a further complication had arisen. In 1816 the Portuguese had invaded the territories of the River Plate and had occupied Montevideo. But for the firm

attitude of the British Government the Peninsula War might well have been reproduced in the New World; even as it was, the struggle between the Spaniards and the Portuguese on the River Plate continued until in 1828 it was brought to an end by British mediation.

The attitude of the United States towards Spanish America had long caused serious alarm among the autocratic governments of the Old World. As far back as 1814 the Monroe Doctrine, if not foreshadowed, was foreseen by the more discerning diplomatists in Europe. 'The dominant party in America', wrote Pozzo di Borgo from Paris to Nesselrode, 'is aiming at a complete revolution in the relations of the New World with the Old, by the destruction of all European interests in the American Continent'. The Duc de Richelieu, the French Prime Minister, was equally alive to the danger, but regarded it from a different angle. 'A complete republican world', so he wrote in 1818, 'young, full of ardour, rich in the product of all climates and with soil of incomparable fertility, establishing itself in a Europe grown old, everywhere ruled by monarchs, overcrowded with inhabitants, shaken by thirty years of revolutionary shocks, and scarce as yet re-established on its ancient foundations, would certainly present a spectacle worthy of the most serious reflections and a very real danger.' The danger he would have averted by an attempt 'to attach the United States to the general system of Europe'—in brief by bringing the United States into the Grand Alliance.

That idea Castlereagh regarded as simply grotesque. To the idea of applying force to bring back the revolted colonies under the dominion of a decadent Spain he was entirely opposed. Spain must solve her problems for herself. Neither Russia nor France must be permitted to go to the assistance of absolutism in Old Spain, still less to help Old Spain to impose the fetters



of despotism upon New Spain. So hopelessly effect was Spanish administration that it was impotent to restrain the piratical assaults of its nationals upon English traders in the West Indies and South America. To protect her traders Great Britain sent out a squadron to the River Plate under Sir Thomas Hardy, and a situation developed hardly to be distinguished from war. In order to meet the not unreasonable complaints of the Spanish Government Great Britain did, in 1818, pass a Foreign Enlistment Act, but, nevertheless, the British Legion made no insignificant contribution to the achievement of South American independence.

At last, in 1819, Ferdinand's Government collected at Cadiz an army of some 20,000 ill-equipped and half-starved soldiers for service against the revolted colonies. The only result was to precipitate the military insurrection under Colonel Riego. Riego's insurrection was defeated, but he had fired the train for an explosion which gradually engulfed the whole kingdom. Ferdinand hurriedly conceded the demands of the insurgents, restored the miserable Constitution of 1812, abolished the Inquisition, and again dissolved the monasteries. But all this did less than nothing for the establishment of a Liberal régime in Spain. The essential conditions did not exist. Reactionaries co-operated with revolutionaries to stifle them at the birth. Such was the situation when Castlereagh drafted the Memorandum to define British policy at the coming Congress at Verona.

From the first, Castlereagh had pursued, both in reference to Old Spain and to the Spanish colonies, a perfectly consistent policy. Humanity and expediency required that the personal safety of the Royal Family should be assured; there must be no repetition of the outrages which disgraced the early days of the Revolution in France; British engagements in regard to Portugal must be honoured; but for the rest there must be

a rigid abstention from any interference in the internal affairs of an independent State.

The problems raised by conditions in Spanish America were of a different order, and much more difficult. Castlereagh's handling of them reveals him, as Dr. Webster truly says, 'at his highest as a diplomatist, courageous, far-seeing, tactful and fertile in expedients to meet new and unknown contingencies'.<sup>1</sup> Castlereagh's policy was emphatically liberal. Great Britain had never sought, she had never consented to accept, any special or exclusive privileges, commercial or political. Her recommendation was that 'the commerce of South America should be opened to all nations upon moderate duties, with a reasonable preference to Spain herself'.<sup>2</sup> Mediation between Spain and her colonies he was prepared to promote, but only if it was 'confined within the bounds of good offices; Spain must not count upon armed assistance for the suppression of the colonial revolt. Above all, Spain must sign a treaty satisfactory to Great Britain for the abolition of the Slave Trade.

Matters dragged on very unsatisfactorily for all parties: for Old Spain, impotent to reconquer, but reluctant to abandon, her American colonies; for the colonies themselves; for Great Britain, neutral as regards their political status, but determined to maintain an 'open door' for her trade; for the European autocracies, anxious to crush revolution but not daring to act in defiance of the Power which held command of the sea; not least, for the United States. One knot was untied when in 1819 Spain sold Florida to the United States; a second when in 1822 the latter recognized the independence of Columbia, Chile, Mexico and Buenos Ayres. In June of that same year Castlereagh w

<sup>1</sup> Webster: II. 406.

<sup>2</sup> *Circular Dispatch* of 1 January 1816.

the Spanish Government that the sands were running out and that every day added to the danger of delay. 'His Catholic Majesty', he wrote, 'must be aware that so large a portion of the world cannot, without fundamentally disturbing the intercourse of civilized society, long continue without some recognized and established relations; that the State which can neither by its councils nor by its arms effectually assert its own rights over its dependencies so as to enforce obedience and thus make itself responsible for maintaining their relations with other Powers, must sooner or later be prepared to see those relations established, from the overruling necessity of the case under some other form.'<sup>1</sup>

This was plain speaking. Equally clear was the language used by Castlereagh in his Memorandum for Verona. Recognition *de facto* has already been granted. 'The practical question then is—How long should the *de facto* system of recognition be maintained to the exclusion of the diplomatic, and when should the latter be adopted?' The answer to the latter question must evidently depend on circumstances, and the British Government reserved to itself full discretion to act according to its view of them.<sup>2</sup>

Castlereagh did not live to use the discretion which he had thus reserved for himself. It fell to the Duke of Wellington to do so: but the Duke was accountable not to Castlereagh but to George Canning. In the judgement of one who is better entitled than any other critic to pass judgement on Castlereagh, the recognition of the Spanish colonies would, if Castlereagh had lived, have been made much sooner, and in 'vastly different form'.<sup>3</sup> The suggestion is that Castlereagh would have reverted to his original intention and

<sup>1</sup> Londonderry to Otis, 28 June 1822. *ap.* Webster: II. 433.

<sup>2</sup> Wellington: *Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda*, I. 287.

<sup>3</sup> Webster: II. 435.

that the Spanish colonies would have achieved independence under a monarchical, not under a republican form. Nor would there have been any such flourish of trumpets as that in which Canning delighted, but a minimum of ostentation. In that case, however, the anthology of English politics would have been impoverished by the loss of a famous phrase.

Nevertheless, the Congress of Verona was, in truth, the culmination of Castlereagh's diplomatic career. The instructions on which the British Plenipotentiaries acted were his. The voice was the Duke of Wellington's; the words were Castlereagh's. The Duke could not prevent French intervention in Spain. A French army 100,000 strong entered Spain under the Duc D'Angoulême in April 1823, and under its protection King Ferdinand gave full rein to his cruel and reactionary impulses. If Canning could not save Old Spain from the grip of the autocrats, he could and did save New Spain; he could and did (1825) save Portugal. But even this was achieved at the cost of breaking up the European Concert which Castlereagh, to the great advantage of European tranquillity, had done much to create and, albeit with difficulty, to maintain.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE END—EPILOGUE AND APPRECIATIONS

CASTLEREAGH's tale was told. His last speech in the House of Commons (on Piracy in the West Indies) was made on July 30th, and before the close of the Session (6 August 1822) he gave unmistakeable signs of mental and physical exhaustion. There was ample reason: for many years he had borne a burden almost intolerable. Virtually Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Commons, he had also been, for ten most anxious years, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The Foreign Embassies were mostly staffed by soldiers or by diplomatists of second-rate quality; in the House of Commons Castlereagh had no colleagues of real parliamentary experience or capacity, except Canning, and Canning only rejoined the Ministry in 1816 and resigned again in 1821. Yet at no period in our history were domestic affairs more harassing than from 1814 to 1820: a palace scandal, sordid in detail and most damaging to the prestige of the monarchy; profound depression, alternating with occasional and illusory recovery in industry, finance and agriculture; social unrest approaching at times the verge of revolution; currency complications and uncertainties—the burden of all this fell primarily on Castlereagh, and it is small wonder if it ultimately crushed him.

Cordial as were his relations with his colleagues, and particularly with Lord Liverpool and Lord Sidmouth, the latter could do little to lighten the burden, for Castlereagh was essentially a solitary worker. In youth

he sought, and greatly profited by, the counsel of his uncle, Lord Camden, and after the old man's death he maintained a close friendship with his son. But, though courteous and charming in general society, he had few friends and no intimates, even in those of his own household. To his wife and his half-brother Sir Charles Stewart, he was devoted, and his affection they returned; but not even to them did he open his mind. Consequently he fed upon his own vitals. He never possessed the inestimable gift of delegating work, or sharing responsibility. Almost every draft of his official correspondence is in his own handwriting. That handwriting, usually so clear and elegant, became in the last two months of his life illegible.

Nor was that the only sign of mental disturbance. The gentlest and most equable of men he suddenly became querulous and suspicious. He believed that he was being shadowed, if not in danger of imminent arrest. He was most anxious to go to Verona: he was convinced that no one could replace him; yet he, who had emerged triumphant from Congress after Congress, shrank from the idea of facing another. In fine, almost all the symptoms of mental deterioration manifested themselves with terrifying rapidity.

Castlereagh's fears were not perhaps wholly imaginary: it may be that rather than alarm his wife he had allowed himself to be victimized by blackmailers, groundless as was the vile charge with which they threatened him.<sup>1</sup> That was the last straw. Years of continuous responsibility and overwork had weakened his powers of resistance. He was going mad, and unfortunately realized it.

<sup>1</sup> The facts are naturally obscure, and the evidence conflicting: hence the cautious statement in the text. But cf. Alison iii., 677, and Richardson: *Recollections of the Last Half Century*, ii, 285-8, and other references, *ap.* Hyde, p. 3.

## ILLNESS AND DEATH

The King was the first to observe in his minister unmistakable symptoms of insanity. On Friday, August 9th, Castlereagh went to take leave of the Sovereign whose departure for Scotland was fixed for the 10th. Excitedly Castlereagh told the King that there was a warrant out for his arrest on a charge of unnatural vice, and that he was about to flee the country, never to return. The King bade him not to talk nonsense but was so alarmed by Castlereagh's behaviour, that he sent for Lord Liverpool in the early hours of the 10th and urged him to warn Castlereagh's doctor. The Duke of Wellington who also saw Castlereagh on the 9th and was equally alarmed, had already taken that precaution. Castlereagh had left for his country house at Cray; his doctor, Dr. Bankhead followed him, and bled him. Lord Liverpool had invited himself to dinner for the 12th, but before this hour came Castlereagh was dead. Warned by Dr. Bankhead, Lady Castlereagh had refused to give her husband the key of his pistol-case, and had removed his razors, but a small pen-knife was overlooked, and with it, on the morning of August 12th, Castlereagh stabbed himself to death. The news was immediately conveyed to Lord Liverpool who promptly despatched a messenger to Peel (in attendance on the King) bidding him break the news, but Peel found the King 'almost prepared for it', but none the less deeply affected. He spoke of Lord Londonderry' wrote Peel to Lord Liverpool, 'in the warmest terms of affection and admiration, and bitterly lamented his loss'.<sup>1</sup> On receipt of the sad news the King wrote consolingly to Lord Stewart. Whether he wrote also to Lady Castlereagh is doubtful; the feud between that lady and the reigning mistress, Lady Conyngham, perhaps forbade the courtesy. Lady Castlereagh was, however, the recipient of many affecting letters of condolence including most apprecia-

<sup>1</sup> *Peel Papers* (ed. Parker), I., 320.

## CASTLEREAGH

tive letters from the Czar Alexander and Prince Metternich.

To say that his death evoked wide-spread sorrow would be untrue. Even pity was not universal. Byron, whose hatred was unappeased by the statesman's tragic end, had the effrontery and bad taste to celebrate it without delay in no fewer than three vile epigrams:

Oh, Castlereagh! Thou art a patriot now  
Cato died for his country, so did'st thou.  
He perished rather than see Rome enslaved,  
Thou cut'st thy throat that Britain may be saved.

So Castlereagh has cut his throat!—The worst  
Of this is—that his own was not the first.

So *He* has cut his throat at last!—Hail! Who?  
The man who cut his country's long ago.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was this a passing exultation at the news of an enemy's death, for in *Don Juan* (C. x, s. 59) he wrote lines not less savage:

Think of the Thunderer falling down below  
Carotid-artery-cutting Castlereagh.

Nay more: he deliberately justified his post-mortem attacks upon his victim:

‘With regard to the late person whom you hear that I have attacked, I can only say that a bad minister’s memory is as much a matter of investigation as his conduct while alive,—for his measures do not die with him like a private individual’s notions. He is a matter of *history*; and, wherever I find a tyrant or a villain I will mark him.’<sup>2</sup>

In striking contrast to Byron’s venomous scurrility is the fine tribute, paid on reflection, to Castlereagh’s

<sup>1</sup> August 1822, *Poems*, VII. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters and Journals* (ed. Prothero), VI. 212-13.



high qualities by a keen political opponent. 'His [Castlereagh's] capacity was greatly underrated', wrote Henry Brougham, 'from the poverty of his discourse; and his ideas passed for much less than they were worth, from the habitual obscurity of his expressions. . . . To judge of his intellect by his eloquence, we should certainly have formed a very unfair estimate of its perspicuity. . . . In council he certainly had far more resources. He possessed a considerable fund of plain sense, not to be misled by any refinement of speculation or clouded by any fanciful notions. He went straight to his point. He was brave politically as well as personally. . . .'<sup>1</sup> The House of Commons is less ungenerous in criticism than Grub Street. Perhaps, however, the finest, certainly the tersest, epitaph was that penned by the Duke of Buckingham: 'As a statesman, as a gentleman, as a man, the Marquis of Londonderry was the Bayard of political chivalry, *sans peur et sans reproche*.'

The King throughout the greater part of his life had been none too friendly with Castlereagh, but on August 9th and again on the 13th he wrote him solicitous and affectionate letters begging him to take every care of himself, remembering how important was his health 'to the country but above all things to me. G.R.'<sup>2</sup> Directly the King heard of his death he wrote in real distress to Lord Liverpool of the 'inestimable value of this superior and excellent person'. Nor was his distress diminished when he realized that he would have to accept Canning as Castlereagh's successor. Lord Liverpool, however, was evidently right to insist upon his nomination. Without Canning his Administration

<sup>1</sup> Brougham: *Statesmen of the Time of George III*, II, 121.

<sup>2</sup> The letter of the 13th was actually written after Castlereagh's death, but of course before the King (on his way to Scotland) had heard the news.

could not possibly have continued for a further five years, if, indeed, for as many months.

Castlereagh was buried in Westminster Abbey, and his funeral, though not a 'public' one, was attended by most of his colleagues and by the Corps Diplomatique. Large crowds lined the streets and were for the most part orderly and sympathetic; but a small knot of men, obviously organized for the purpose, raised derisive cheers as the coffin was borne into the Abbey. 'Some miscreants' (to quote a contemporary account), 'raised a shout which echoed loudly through every corner of the Abbey'. This 'display of diabolical exultation' was 'not spontaneous' but the work of a 'few hired ruffians'.<sup>1</sup> The incident was grossly exaggerated, as such incidents commonly are, by the contemporary Press, and the report that the obsequies of Lord Castlereagh were interrupted by a general manifestation of public hostility was sedulously promulgated by Byron and Thomas Moore, whose venomous gossip has made a deeper impression upon the judgement of posterity than is justified by the responsibly recorded facts. J. W. Croker (writing in 1848), refers to 'the slanderous and malignant misrepresentation of the public feeling . . . by some low libellers of the day', and adds that the libels had recently (1848) been reproduced by 'the false, foul and unfeminine pen of Miss Martineau'.<sup>2</sup>

Popularity, Castlereagh never sought or obtained. Both in Ireland and in England he was identified with measures which were execrated by large masses of people, and excited little enthusiasm even among the more discerning. A soldier's and a sailor's achievements the public at large can appreciate; but in the case of a diplomatist the greater the success and the

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register* (1822), p. 181, and cf. Croker: *Correspondence and Diaries*, I. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Quarterly Review*, lxxxiv. 268.

value of his work, the less widely is it advertised. The unreformed House of Commons could appreciate such work better than the House which since 1918 has been reformed out of recognition; and twice, on his return from Peace Conferences, it paid Castlereagh a rare if not a unique compliment. But although the compliment was unanimous it did not argue general popularity in the House. Still less did it reflect the opinion of the country at large. Yet Castlereagh, despite his reputation for autocratic leanings and methods, had a lively sense of the indispensability, even in pre-reform days, of popular support:—

‘We were supported in the war . . . by the whole energy and power of the nation. This is our compass, and by this we must steer; and our allies on the Continent may be assured that they will deceive themselves if they suppose that we could for six months act with them unless the mind of the nation was in the cause. They must not, therefore, press us to place ourselves on any ground John Bull will not maintain.’<sup>1</sup>

Of the innumerable judgements passed on Castlereagh by contemporaries and later critics it is possible to cite only a very few. Among the former, one of the most discriminating was Greville’s, and it was written on the day after Castlereagh’s death.

‘As a Minister he is a great loss to his party, and still greater to his friends and dependents to whom he was the best of patrons: to the country I think he is none. Nobody can deny that his talents were great, and perhaps he owed his influence and authority as much to his character as to his abilities. His appearance was dignified and imposing: he was affable in his manners and agreeable in society. The great feature was a cool and determined courage, which gave an appearance of

<sup>1</sup> To Lord Stewart, 24 February 1820 (quoted by Lady Londonderry, *Robert Stewart, Second Marquess of Londonderry*, p. 69).

resolution and confidence to all his actions, and inspired his friends with admiration and excessive devotion to him, and caused him to be respected by his most violent opponents. As a speaker he was prolix, monotonous, and never eloquent, except, perhaps, for a few minutes when provoked into a passion by something which had fallen out in debate. But, notwithstanding these defects, and still more the ridicule which his extraordinary phraseology had drawn upon him, he was always heard with attention. He never spoke ill: his speeches were continually replete with good sense and strong argument, and though they seldom offered much to admire, they generally contained a great deal to be answered. I believe he was considered one of the best managers of the House of Commons who ever sat in it, and he was eminently possessed of the good taste, good humour, and agreeable manners which are more requisite to make a good leader than eloquence, however brilliant.' <sup>1</sup>

Only a few days later (19 August) Henry Brougham wrote to Creevey: 'Well! This is really a considerable event in point of size. Put all their men together in one scale, and poor Castlereagh in the other—single, he plainly weighed them down. . . . One can't help feeling a little for him, after being pitted against him for several years pretty regularly. . . . Also, he was a *gentleman*, and the only one amongst them.' <sup>2</sup> Brougham wrote, of course, as an opponent, albeit a not ungenerous one, and he wrote at the moment. The Duke of Wellington's estimate was that of a friend, but of a friend no longer under the emotion of recent bereavement:

'Lord Castlereagh possessed a clear mind, the highest talents and the most steady principle, more so than

<sup>1</sup> *The Greville Memoirs*, I. pp. 32-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Creevey Papers*, II. 44.

anybody I ever knew—he could do everything but speak in Parliament, that he could not do<sup>1</sup>.

A historian, but himself also a politician, while condemning Castlereagh's foreign policy as 'unfortunate' and his domestic policy as 'disastrous', nevertheless writes: 'The death of Lord Londonderry, at the early age of fifty-one, was one of the most important events in the history of the present century. . . . He had attained a position which perhaps has no parallel in the annals of his country. It was hardly an exaggeration to say that he had been the arbiter of Europe.'<sup>2</sup>

The fine qualities of Castlereagh were in some respects more highly appreciated by foreigners than by his own countrymen. They perceived that with habitual courtesy he combined a constancy of purpose and a firmness of will which simplified the transaction of business. To the rare privilege accorded to him by the Czar Alexander reference has been already made. Metternich learnt more and more to like and trust him. 'Absolutely straight, a stranger to all prejudice, as just as he is kind, Lord Castlereagh knew at a glance how to distinguish the truth in everything.'

Rush, who as United States Minister in London (1817-25) was only half a foreigner, wrote of Castlereagh:

'Always self-possessed, always firm and fearless, his judgement was the guide of his opinions, and his opinions the guide of his conduct undaunted by opposition in Parliament or out of it.'<sup>3</sup>

M. Albert Sorel was wholly a foreigner, and that brilliant French historian paid Castlereagh a compli-

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Wellington to Lady Salisbury, recorded in latter's private diary, 5 June 1836 (*ap.* Lady Londonderry, *op. cit.*, p. 72).

<sup>2</sup> Walpole: *History of England*, II. 127 (2nd ed., 1900).

<sup>3</sup> *The Court of London, 1819-1825*, p. 120 (London, 1873).

ment, the greater because only partly intended as one:

‘Castlereagh prided himself on principles to which he adhered with an unshakable constancy, which could not, in practice, be distinguished from obstinacy; but these principles were in no measure abstract or speculative; they were all comprehended in one, the supremacy of English interests; they all proceeded from this high reason of State.’<sup>1</sup>

‘The supremacy of English interests.’ That was the governing principle of Castlereagh’s policy, no less than of Canning’s. But while Canning’s adhesion to the principle was recognized—Castlereagh’s was not. ‘He was a Briton through and through, British in his feelings, British in his aims, British in all his policy and projects.’ So said Rush, the American Minister, of Canning. The description would equally have applied to Castlereagh. But Castlereagh did not possess Canning’s facility for phrase-making. Castlereagh, as Lord Salisbury characteristically observes, ‘might have maintained his policy with impunity if in his speeches he would have done readier homage to the Liberal catchwords of the day. If he had only constructed a few brilliant periods about nationality or freedom, or given a little wordy sympathy to Greece, or Naples, or Spain, or the South American republics, the world would have heard much less of the horrors of his policy.’<sup>2</sup>

Of those ‘horrors’ the world hears to-day much less than it did when Lord Salisbury chafed against the Whig ascendancy in historical criticism. The emphasis has changed; the angle has shifted. If ‘John Bull’ has no misgivings about Castlereagh’s intense if unemotional patriotism, the internationalist, with equal

<sup>1</sup> A. Sorel: *L’Europe et la Revolution Francaise*, VIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Biographical Essays*, p. 53.

justice, claims him as a 'good European'. He was, indeed, not less an ardent patriot because it was given to him to perceive that the 'supremacy of English interests' was not incompatible, nay, indeed, was identical, with the interests of Europe and the well-being of mankind. The greatest of English interests—it is a commonplace to affirm it—is peace. The peace of Europe and of the world was the goal at which Castlereagh consistently aimed. In the instrument which he forged at Chaumont, which he sharpened in Paris, which he kept bright and clean at Aix-la-Chapelle, was, he believed, well calculated to effect his purpose. Troppau and Laibach disillusioned him. The instrument he had forged, already blunted, was then perverted to base uses. At Verona he would have discarded it. Canning, who did but fulfil the intentions of Castlereagh and faithfully carry out his instructions, has got undeserved credit for reversing his policy. There was no reversal of policy. Canning advertised it by methods from which Castlereagh would have shrunk; he proclaimed it *urbi et orbi* in words which rang round the universe; but the policy was Castlereagh's, and research has at long last rendered to him the homage that is his due. Lord Salisbury, a kindred spirit, intuitively perceived the truth which laborious scholarship has substantiated. Castlereagh, he wrote, 'was that rare phenomenon—a practical man of the highest order, who yet did not by that fact forfeit his title to be considered a man of genius. . . . His mind was energetic and original without suffering in the slightest degree from any bias of sentiment. . . . No tinge of that enthusiastic temper which leads men to overhunt a beaten enemy, to drive a good cause to excess, to swear allegiance to a formula, or to pursue an impracticable ideal, ever threw its shadow upon Lord Castlereagh's serene, impassive intelligence. . . . It

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was this impossibility which worked so badly for his fame.'

His fame did suffer: but not permanently:

Wherefore not feel sure  
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend  
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign  
To the low ground once more the ignoble 'Term  
And raise the genius on his orb again—  
That Time will do me right.

If Castlereagh had been prone to introspection and speculation, thus he too might have expressed his confidence in the impartial judgement of posterity. Nor would his confidence have been misplaced. Time has done him right.



## APPENDIX A.

### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE following contains only a short list of books which any reader of this book who is interested in the career of Castlereagh will find useful to supplement my sketch. For an enumeration of the MSS. materials *students* must refer (for the Irish period) to Hyde, and for Castlereagh's work at the Foreign Office to Webster (op. cit.). All the Foreign Office and War Office Papers dealing with the period (except, of course, the Londonderry Papers still in the custody of the present Marquess of Londonderry) are now deposited at the Public Record Office, and can there be consulted. All the Papers dealing with Indian Affairs (1801-6), including those formerly in the keeping of the Company at East India House, are now at the India Office. For the Irish and the Foreign Office periods of Castlereagh's career the MSS. fields have been so closely reaped by Dr. Hyde and Dr. Webster that more casual labourers may well be discouraged from gleaning therein. No so, with the MSS. at the India Office, which I felt it my duty to examine with a care only partially reflected in the notes to Chapter vii. Many of these have already been printed, like the War Office Papers, in the voluminous Despatches of Wellesley and Wellington.

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## ABBREVIATIONS IN MORE FREQUENT NOTES

C.C.	= <i>Memoirs and Correspondence of Castlereagh</i> (see 'A').
P.D. or Hansard	= <i>Parliamentary Debates.</i>
I.O.R.	= {India Office Records.
I.O.H.S.M.}	{Home Series Miscellaneous.
B.D.	= <i>British Diplomacy</i> , ed. Webster (see 'A').
Webster I	= <i>Foreign Policy of Castlereagh (1812-15).</i>
Webster II	= <i>Ibid. (1815-22)</i> (see 'B').
Hyde	= <i>The Rise of Castlereagh</i> (see 'B').
Alison	= <i>Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir C. Stewart</i> (see 'B').
Wellesley	= <i>Wellesley Despatches</i> (see 'A').
W.D.	= <i>Wellington Despatches</i> (see 'A').
W.S.D.	= <i>Wellington Supplementary Despatches</i> (see 'A').

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